

GOVERNING SMALL-SCALE FORESTS SUSTAINABLY: THE ROLE OF THE EASTERN ONTARIO MODEL FOREST ORGANIZATION



A report presented to the Eastern Ontario Model Forest

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1. Research background and objective

From July 4th through to August 1st, 2016, I visited the Eastern Ontario region to learn about the role of the Eastern Ontario Model Forest (EOMF) in the governance for the sustainable management of small-scale forests. My field visit to the EOMF formed part of my PhD thesis which focused on ‘assessing the *effectiveness of intermediary organizations in convening social-private partnerships to support sustainable forest management of small-scale forests*’ Prior to my field visit to the EOMF, I had visited the Kyoto Model Forest Association (KMFA) in Kyoto, Japan, to also learn about their role in small-scale forest governance.

The selection of the EOMF and the KMFA as case studies for my research provided me with the opportunity to examine how Model Forests (MFs) operating in different institutional, legal and regulatory contexts work to improve governance for the sustainable management of small-scale forests. Both MFs have adopted innovative collaborative partnership arrangements to improve the sustainable management of small-scale forests.

In Eastern Ontario, my purpose was to examine how the EOMF uses the Forest Stewardship Council’s (FSC) group certification program to undertake effective and sustainable management. In addition, I was interested in learning about the history of the certification program, the stakeholders involved and their relationship with the EOMF, and the experiences – both positive and negative – of woodlot owners and forest managers.

To achieve the above objectives, I received support from the coordinator of the certification program and the manager of the EOMF to talk to several landowners and forest managers on their experiences in the certification program.

In the next sections of the report, I describe the activities I undertook to collect data for my research. Following this, I present the findings of the research and then conclude with some recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the certification program.

2. Field Visit and Data Collection Activities

I undertook three main activities to collect data. These include semi-structured interviews, a questionnaire survey, and field observations. These are described below.

2.1 Individual Interviews

Individual interviews were conducted with some participants involved in the certification program. Table 1 shows the category of participants who were interviewed. Although the focus of the interviews was on certified woodlot owners, I also interviewed forest managers and non-certified woodlot owners. Most of the interviews were conducted via phone while others were conducted in-person.

Table 1: Summary of the category of interview participants

Interview participants	Number of participants interviewed	Place interviewed
Staff of the Model Forest	2	Premises of the EOMF
Government staff associated with the Certification program	2	Premises of the EOMF
Forest managers	7	Through the phone and on the premises of the manager
Certified woodlot owners	16	Mostly online
Non-certified woodlot owners	3	In-person
Total number of persons interviewed	30	

2.2 Questionnaire survey

A survey was conducted to assess the experience of landowners who are members of the EOMF and who are also members of the certification program. Specifically, the survey targeted all woodlot owners – including certified and non-certified woodlot owners, community forest managers and members of the certification working group. The questionnaire for the survey included both closed and open-ended questions on two main issues. The first part focused on the relationship between woodlot owners and the EOMF. The second part, on the other hand, focused on the perceptions, experiences and expectations of woodlot owners in the certification program. The questionnaire was sent to participants on August 23, 2016, with an expected completion date on September 19, 2016. However, the completion date was

extended to October 31, 2016, to enable more participants to submit their responses. Table 2 shows the socio-demographic background of the survey participants.

Table 2: Socio-demographic background of survey respondents (N=66).

General characteristics of survey respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	55	83.3
Female	9	13.6
Undisclosed	2	3.0
TOTAL	66	100
Proportion of respondents self-declared as Indigenous	2	3
Age		
25 - 34	2	3.0
35 - 44	3	4.5
45 - 54	7	10.6
55 - 64	23	34.8
65+	31	47.0
Highest level of Education		
High School Graduate	1	1.5
Technical School or Community College	11	16.7
Some University	4	6.1
Undergraduate University Degree (Bachelors)	22	33.3
Some Graduate Studies	6	9.1
Graduate University Degree (Masters, Doctorate)	22	33.3
Size of forestland owned		
Up to 10 ha	10	15.6
11 – 20 ha	10	15.6
21 – 30 ha	5	7.8
31 – 40 ha	7	10.9
41 – 50 ha	6	9.4
Above 50	26	40.6
Functions of forests (multiple responses)		
Wildlife watching	50	75.8
Hiking	45	68.2
Firewood	45	68.2
Hunting and fishing	35	53
Cross-county skiing	35	53.0
Timber production	27	40.9
Investment	27	40.9
Permanent residence	24	35.4
Non-timber forest products (e.g., berry picking, mushroom)	19	28.8
Camping	13	19.7
Seasonal residence	12	18.2
Others ¹	12	18.2
Membership of Groups (multiple responses)		
Woodlot owners' association	44	66.7
EOMF certification working group	21	31.8
Maple syrup producer	8	12.1
Community forest manager	5	7.6
Private forest manager	11	16.7
Private woodlot owner	25	37.9
Others ²	10	15.2

¹ This includes maple syrup production, Christmas trees, cultural materials, educational tours, trails, wetland, trapping and snowshoeing.

² The others include environmental scientist, government program manager, stewardship council and conservation authority, and Board of EOMF.

In all, 66 participants responded to the survey. Out of the 66 participants, 35 identified as members of the certification program. Table 3 shows the characteristics of survey participants who identified themselves as members of the certification program.

Table 3: Characteristics of participants involved in the certification program

Involvement in the Forest certification program (N=66)	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	35	53.0
No, I was involved but I have opted out	7	10.6
No, I have never been involved	24	36.4
Participated in the survey as (N=35)		
A certified woodlot owner	25	71.4
A member of the EOMF Certification Working Group	5	14.3
The manager of a community/county forest	2	5.7
Others	3	8.6
Length of involvement in the Forest certification program (N=35)		
Less than a 1 year	1	2.9
1- 4 years	5	14.3
5 - 9 years	10	28.6
more than 10 years	19	54.3

2.3 Field observations

I visited certified woodlots to observe the nature of forest lands in eastern Ontario. In all, I visited four certified private woodlots and two community forests (Larose and Limerick forests). In two of the visits, I was taken around by the woodlot owners themselves. The coordinator of the certification program took me to the third forest site while in the last forest site I went with a community forest manager. During the field visits, I learned about the history of the forest and also observed some sensitive parts of the forest such as brooks, specific bird or animal habitats, invasive plants, peculiar tree species, among others.

Below, I show pictorial evidence of the field visits I undertook.



Picture 1: John (middle) with Albert Treichel (left) and Larry Mcdermott (right)



Picture 2: John with Ray Fortune



Picture 3: Scott Davis (left) and Albert Treichel (right)



Picture 4: Certified forests in Eastern Ontario

3. Main research findings

The findings are presented into two main parts. In the first part, participants' perceptions of forest management challenges, motivations for joining or collaborating with the EOMF, and knowledge on the EOMFs role in forest governance are presented. In the second part, the knowledge and experiences of participants involved in the group forest certification program are presented.

3.1 Perceived role of the EOMF in forest governance

3.1.1 *Why do landowners collaborate with the EOMF?*

'My passion lies in working with liked minded landowners to ensure that forests and natural capital remain in healthy condition for future generations to enjoy (culturally, spiritually, ecologically, materially'.....(Interview participant).

In the survey, participants were asked about their motivation for joining the EOMF using pre-designed survey questions. Figure 1 shows the responses of participants in the order of importance for collaborating with the EOMF. In terms of the first order of importance, two main motivations were highlighted. These are interest in achieving sustainable forest management and ownership of forest. For second-order importance, protection of the intrinsic values of forests and achieving sustainable forest management were the most dominant motivations. Finally, in terms of the third order of importance, the majority of participants were motivated by membership of forestry associations, ownership of forest, contributing to community development, concern for protecting Indigenous forest values, and protection of the intrinsic values of forests.

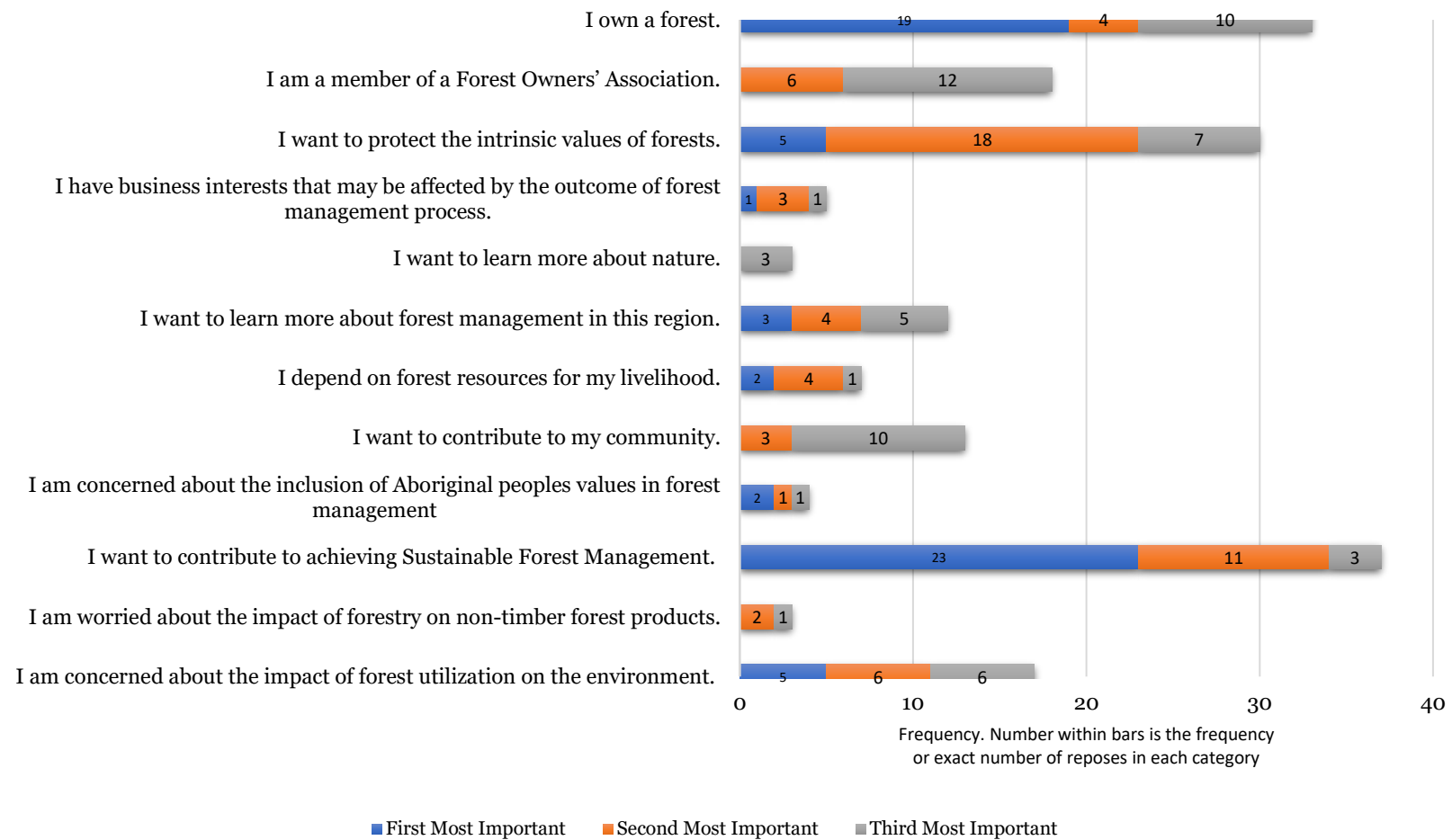


Figure 1: Participants ranking of motivational factors for collaborating with the EOMF.

In addition to the pre-designed survey responses, participants provided additional reasons for collaborating with the EOMF. Below is a summary of these responses:

- Create an environment for protecting endangered species
- Realize economic gain from woodlot
- Support good physical and psychological health
- Keep and manage forested land for future use
- Access expertise and knowledge on woodlot management
- Contribute to the development of commercially sustainable forest-based bio-economy
- Support forests for recreation and education
- Promote traditional knowledge and science for forest protection

3.1.2 Perceived role of the EOMF in forest governance

In the survey, participants were asked how they communicate with the EOMF, their familiarity with the EOMFs role in forest governance and the importance of the EOMFs in forest governance.

First, in terms of communication with the EOMF, survey participants identified multiple ways of communicating with the EOMF (Figure 2). The vast majority of participants mentioned that they communicate with the EOMF through emails (95.5%), followed by participation in conferences (72.7%), newsletters (60.6%) and through local forestry association (51.5%). Communication through social media (6.1%) and Radio/TV (0%) were the least mentioned.

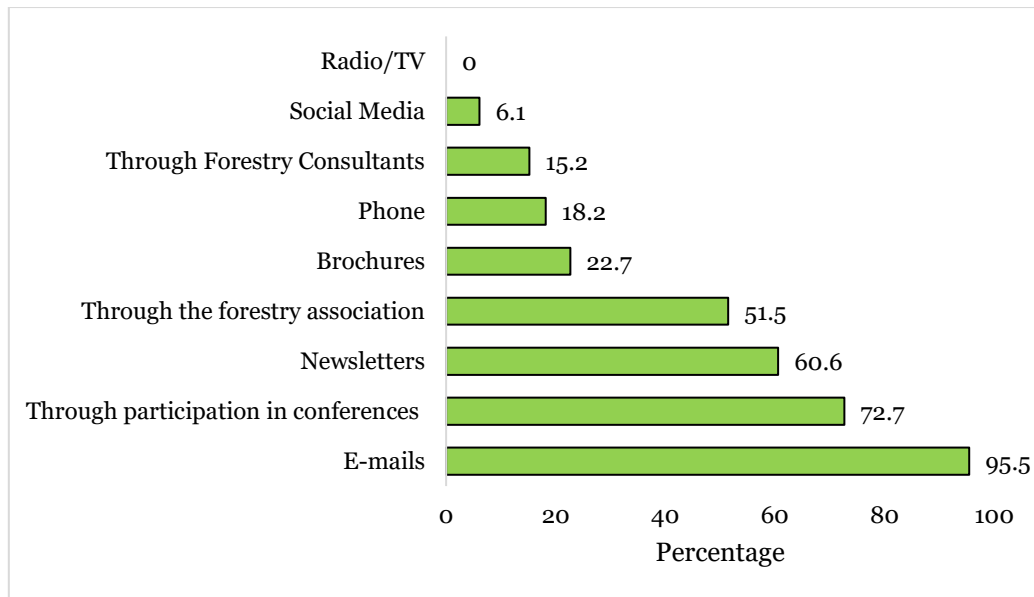


Figure 2. Mediums of communication with the EOMF

Second, participants were asked about their familiarity with the EOMF's role in forest governance. The findings showed that the majority of participants said they are familiar with the EOMF's role in forest governance (Figure 3). Approximately 55% said they are moderately familiar with the EOMF's role while 39.4% said they are very familiar. However, 6.1% of participants said they are not familiar with the EOMF's role in forest governance.

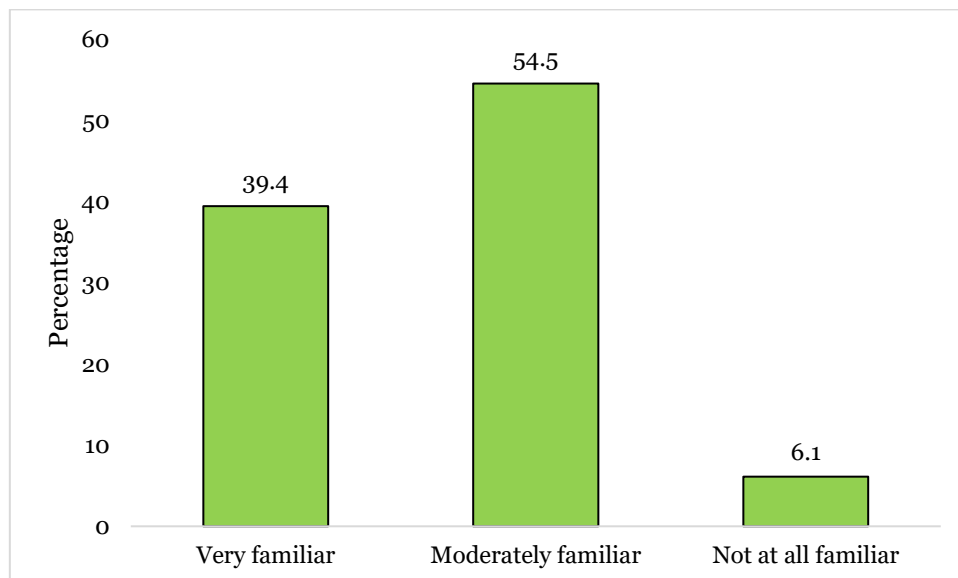


Figure 3. Levels of familiarity with the EOMF's role in forest governance

Third and finally, participants were also asked about the importance of the EOMF's role in forest governance (Figure 4). The results showed that 68% of respondents agreed that the EOMF was important (very important and important) in the

governance of forest in the region. Also, 27% of participants said the EOMF was somewhat important, while 4.5% each said the EOMF was not important or they do not know.

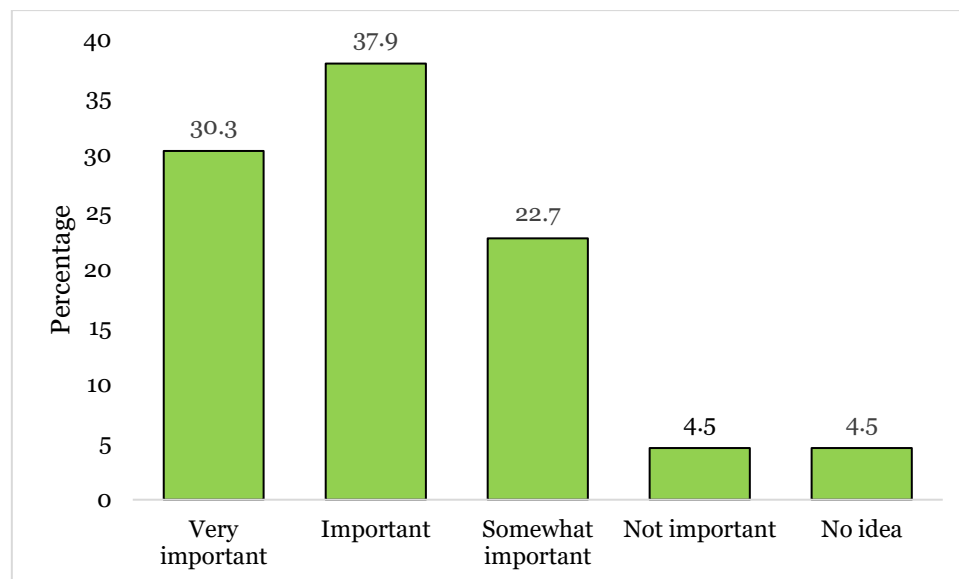


Figure 4. Perceived importance of the Eastern Ontario Model Forest regarding the governance of forests in this region

To understand better the role of the EOMF in forest governance, the networking role of the EOMF was also examined. Participants were asked to indicate the organizations or groups they have collaborated or benefitted from as a result of their association with the EOMF. Figure 5 shows a frequency list of the organizations/groups that participants mentioned. The findings show that the networking role of the EOMF cut across diverse sectors (e.g., government, private sector and non-governmental organizations) and levels (e.g., international, national, regional and local forestry-related organizations) of society.

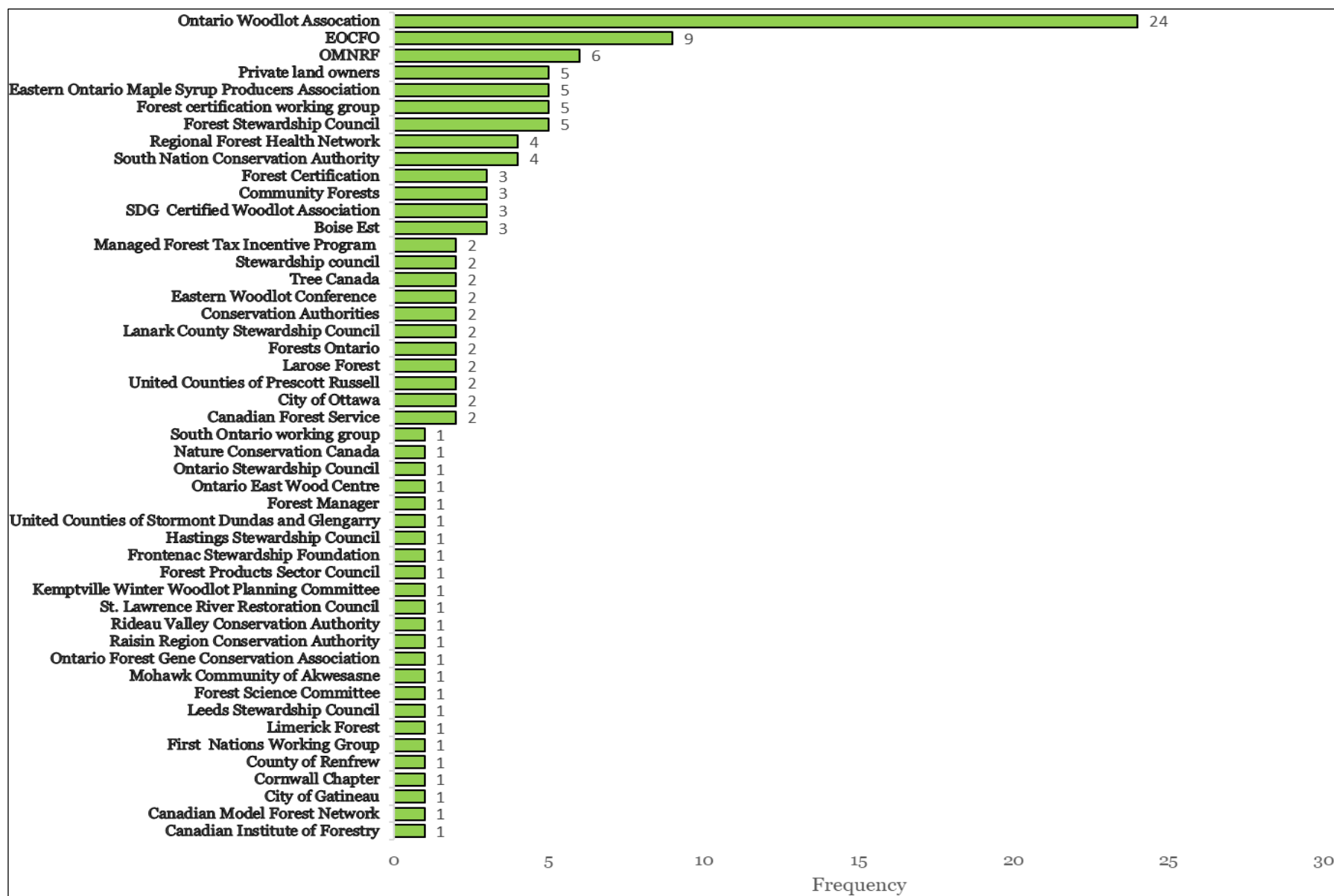


Figure 5. Organizations/groups/programs participants have benefited from as a result of membership with the EOMF

Figure 6 also shows a summary of the kind of collaboration or support received from the organizations listed in Figure 5. From the word frequency, the bigger the word, the higher the frequency of the word. For instance, education appears bigger than any other word suggesting that collaboration through education is the most common form of benefit received by participants.



Figure 6. Forms of collaboration with related organizations

participants identified lack of effective local leadership to coordinate forest planning activities, lack of time to participate in forestry meetings and long distances to forestry meetings as common challenges to effective forest governance.

Table 4: Forest management challenges (Percent (%), N=66)

	Regularly a challenge	Sometimes a challenge	Never a challenge	Do not know
Level of remuneration for local forest workers	9.1	22.7	24.2	43.9
Inadequate opportunities to participate in decision-making on forest management	10.6	30.3	37.9	21.2
Lack of effective local leadership to coordinate forest planning activities	21.2	40.9	25.8	12.1
Poor coordination of private forest owners by the local Woodlot Owners' Association	9.1	18.2	50	22.7
Difficulty in meeting provincial tax regulations on private forest ownership	7.6	22.7	45.5	24.2
Lack of adequate information to participate in forestry decisions	4.5	31.8	50	13.6
Unsafe working conditions for forestry workers	1.5	27.3	34.8	36.4
Low level of training for forestry workers involved in forest management activities	4.5	34.8	27.4	33.3
Lack of transparency in forest management contracts involving forestry associations	7.6	28.8	18.2	45.4
Inadequate opportunities for women to participate in forestry activities	4.5	18.2	37.9	39.4
Inadequate opportunities for the participation of Indigenous communities in decisions on forest management	6.1	19.7	30.3	43.9
Lack of time to participate in decisions regarding forests	7.6	50	19.7	22.7
Longer distance to forestry meeting places	13.6	50	24.2	12.2
Lack of mutual respect and equality at forestry meetings	0	10.6	62.1	27.3

In addition to the findings from Table 4, some survey participants mentioned additional forest management challenges. A summary of these is listed below.

- Lack of government interest in woodlots
- Lack of recognition of urban forests
- Limited economic gain from woodlot operation
- Lack of markets for logs

- Poor economic return from forestry investment; woodlot expenses often exceed revenue
- Lack of cooperative relationships between local conservation authority and private forest owners

The next sections of the report focus on the assessment of the EOMF's role in the group forest certification program.

3.2 Motivation for joining the certification program

In both the survey and interviews, landowners were asked about their motivation for joining the group certification program. The results from the survey showed that more than 90% of respondents considered the preservation of high forest conservation values as motivation for joining the certification program (Table 5). Also, over two-thirds of respondents identified recognition for good forest management practices as a motivation for joining the certification program. Moreover, the involvement of the woodlot owner's association and the model forest in the certification program were also considered as important motivating factors by more than two-thirds of respondents.

Table 5: Motivating factors for joining certification (Percent (%), N=35)

	Not important	Moderately important	Very important
Contribute to the preservation of high conservation forest values.	4.2	29.2	66.7
Safeguard local employment	60.9	30.4	8.7
Receive higher prices from wood markets	36.4	40.9	22.7
Be recognized for good forest management practices	12.5	41.7	45.8
Because of the involvement of the woodlot owner's association	25	33.3	41.7
Involvement of the model forest	16.7	45.8	37.5
Recommended by a government agency	52.2	34.8	13.0
Encouraged by the participation of a fellow forest owner	60.9	17.4	21.7
Others ¹			

¹Information sharing with other linked minded forest owners, IPM was a major disruptive influence, property saving tax.

3.3 Knowledge of the certification program

In this section, respondents were asked about their knowledge of the certification program. The questions included both positive and negative statements on certification. In general, almost all participants showed a greater understanding of

the goals of the certification program (Table 6). On the other hand, there were mixed responses in terms of attitudes – both negative and positive – towards the certification program. For instance, on the positive side, majority of respondents indicated that the certification was less costly, improves education on Indigenous values and relationship with other landowners, and demonstrate responsible forest management. In addition, majority of respondents said the managers of the certification are fair and transparent and able to resolve conflicts. On the other hand, in terms of negative feedback, some respondents agreed to statements such as more time is spent in documentation to get certified; it is difficult to realize market benefits; and there is an increase in restrictions on harvesting due to certification.

Table 6: Positive and negative statements on certification (Percent (%), N=35)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	No opinion
The goals of the certification program are understandable	2.9	-	55.9	41.2	-
Participating in the forest certification scheme is costly	8.8	44.1	26.5	8.8	11.8
Participating in the certification program demonstrates a commitment to responsible forest management	-	5.9	38.2	55.9	-
Certification provides opportunities for education about Indigenous forest values	2.9	2.9	52.9	3.1	38.2
A lot of time is spent on the documentation so as to meet the requirements of certification	5.9	26.9	26.5	20.6	20.1
It is easy to realize the market benefits of certification	24.2	36.4	18.2	3.0	18.2
It is easy to understand and prove compliance with certification standards	3.1	18.8	56.3	9.4	12.5
It is difficult to voice concerns regarding the certificate process	3.0	51.5	12.1	6.1	27.3
There is a lack of transparency in forest management contract under the certification program	8.8	41.2	5.9	2.9	41.2
Certification program helps foster collaboration with Indigenous peoples	6.1	3.0	30.3	6.1	54.5
Certification has led to more restrictions on harvesting practices	11.8	23.5	35.3		29.4
The managers of the forest certification scheme are effective in resolving conflicts	3.0	-	51.5	3.0	42.4
The forest certification scheme has helped to improve relationships with other landowners	2.9	5.9	50	5.9	35.3
The managers of the forest certification scheme are fair in their relationship with all certified woodlot owners	2.9	2.9	50	17.6	26.5
Participation in the forest certification program helps to meet provincial regulations on woodlot ownership	2.9	-	44.1	29.4	23.5

3.4 Benefits and satisfaction with the certification program

The level of satisfaction with the certification program were generally positive. Table 7 shows the responses of participants on their level of satisfaction with the certification program. Majority of participants were generally satisfied with the certification program in terms of access to information on current forest management practices, professional forest monitoring, and professional training, improved protection of high forest conservation values, and access to certified forest market. However, majority of participants were generally not satisfied with the market benefits of certification, especially higher prices for certified wood.

Table 7: Level of satisfaction with the certification program (Percent (%), N=35)

	Completely dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Completely satisfied	No opinion
Improved access to information on current forest management practices	4.2	-	33.3	20.8	41.7
Increased access to less costly professional forest monitoring	8.3	-	29.2	29.2	33.3
Increased access to less costly professional training	4.2	-	33.3	29.2	33.3
Enhanced access to certified forest markets	4.3	8.7	34.8	8.7	43.5
Improved contribution to the preservation of high conservation forest values	4.2	-	29.2	58.3	8.3
Higher prices from wood markets	4.3	8.7	26.1	8.7	52.2
Safeguarding local employment	4.3	-	13	13	69.6
Recognized for good forest management practices	8.7	-	21.7	52.2	17.4

In addition to the survey, the interview findings also provided additional insights on the benefits derived from the certification program. Table 8 shows examples of the benefits mentioned by participants. These include ‘feeling good’, networking opportunities, education and learning and protection from bad loggers. Consistent with the survey findings, interview participants expressed mixed benefits relative to the economics of certification. While the majority of the interview participants

indicated that certification has opened up opportunities to have access to certified markets, they also stated that there were fewer market benefits in terms of higher prices for certified logs.

Table 8: Summary of the impacts of the certification program

Themes	Representative quote
Feel good	<i>Well, I think the benefit is mostly optics right now. I feel good about being a member in the sense that I am trying to do the right thing with woodlot, but then, so are people who have management plans for their forest. it's more or less one of the same but is the symbolism of the FSC that makes the difference – that people put some value to that so when they learn that my forest is a certified forest that tells them something that is just beyond having management.</i>
Networking	<i>I just think is really great being in a group with other people who have the same interest...like every year we do field tours in both Spring and Fall and we get to see what other people are doing on their properties and think about what the best practices are that you can implement on yours – it is a good way for people to learn....Landowner</i>
Access to information on woodlot management – Education and training	<i>It's been really valuable and just providing people with the connecting point – who to call for advice or who to call even just for contacts. So, I think through the woodlot association website and stuff like that a lot of people have access to good information and different resources. As landowner resource centre that's been very helpful and so I think for the broad group that's really helpful.</i>
Education	<i>I guess it is basic education...we benefit from their reports very much, so we've learnt a great deal. We've also at these meetings met important people who have woodlots and we get their take on how to manage properly... Landowner</i>
Learning	<i>I have learnt a lot from being part of the group... that's where you get all the information and they say that you should get trees that are grown in this area, from parents of this area. Otherwise, they don't grow well. If you take a white spine from southern Ontario and bring it here it doesn't survive. Well, it survives but it doesn't thrive as well as all the others. That's another thing I learnt from the Ontario Woodlot Association and from the EOMF. I learnt a lot from the educational point of view.... Landowner</i>
Economics – mixed benefits	<i>It was quite true that the market advantage for certification has been a disappointment. In some cases, it is true that some pulp mills when they don't need as much wood they will decide they only take certified wood and so sometimes there is an advantage you will be able to sell your wood if you are certified but you are not going to get any extra money for it.... Landowner</i>
Fewer market benefits	<i>I think the certification objectives have been for whatever reason have been less successful. There is no premium price to be gained by certification at least not now and I don't know whenever there will be, maybe there will be but certainly not now. And I also at least as far as I can understand we don't really necessarily have improved market access although the only time that I tried harvesting arrangements with a company that does adhere to those principles, I think they were better and I liked the way they operateForest Manager</i>
Learning about Indigenous values	<i>Generally, the FSC has brought more attention to indigenous values on forest management....it has helped raise the profile of indigenous values at least at the national and international levels...Forest Manager.</i>
Protection from 'bad' loggers and helping	<i>Certification can prevent that kind of situation where loggers rip you off. Because when they came here and took the logging out, they had to fill out their sheet for each load of what they took out and I'm sure EOMF</i>

set up proper logging contract

monitored that because they had them certified. And then the aspect that the auditors came in after to ensure that we protected stick nest and ponds and that was done at the right time of the year, so we did a minimum of damage you know for rutting and stuff. And that was as a result of Scott and the certification process, I learnt a lot of that...
Landowner

Source: Interviews

Finally, some interview participants expressed worry and uncertainty about the future of certification on private land since they believed the EOMF's current focus had shifted to relatively large-scale forests, especially community forests and commercially-oriented private landowners.

4. Summary and Recommendations

This report has presented findings on the role of the EOMF in the governance of woodlots in the eastern Ontario region. As part of this, the report specifically examined the experiences of landowners in the group forest certification program.

A summary of the findings showed that in terms of governance challenges, landowners are concerned with leadership and coordination of forest management planning on woodlots, seeming lack of government interest in woodlots and urban forests, poor economic returns on woodlots and distance to physical participation in MF activities. These notwithstanding, majority of participants recognized the EOMF as an important organization for promoting governance for the sustainable management of woodlots. Specifically, the EOMF offered the opportunity for landowners with diverse motivations for owning and managing forests to be brought together and to explore and opportunities for achieving these motivations.

Relative to the group certification program, the findings show that the program provided a good platform for several landowners with diverse forest management motivations to pursue these motivations. For most of the participants, the motivation to join the certification program was due to the opportunities it provided to preserve high forest conversation values and to be recognized for good forest management practices. Moreover, the majority of participants also indicated they felt comfortable joining the certification program because participation cost was low and the fact that

the program was led by the model forest and had representation from the local woodlot owner's association.

In general, the overwhelming majority of participants involved in the certification program rated the program positively, particularly in relation to improved access to professional forest monitoring and access to a range of educational, learning and networking opportunities. Although some participants expressed concern with the limited economic benefits from the program, they found the program very useful since it aligned with their values for responsible forest management. In this context, the managers of the program need to find ways to address the concerns raised by some of the participants. Particularly, woodlot owners need an assurance that there is a future for them in the certification program even as more effort is made to broaden participation to include large properties that can help the program to be commercially viable. Thus, in the long term, managers of the program need to find a balance between achieving financial sustainability of the program and the participation of small-scale woodlot landowners.

Finally, it will be important for the EOMF to develop strategies to retain and also attract more woodlot owners. In this context, it is recommended that the EOMF continues to deepen the trust and legitimacy it enjoys within the region by broadening the participation and support from other forest governance actors such as municipalities, conservation authorities, woodlot owner associations and community forestry enterprises.

A more comprehensive assessment on the role of EOMF in the governance for the sustainable management of woodlots in eastern Ontario can be derived from two published materials listed below.

- Boakye-Danquah, J., & Reed, M. G. (2019). *The participation of non-industrial private forest owners in forest certification programs: The role and effectiveness of intermediary organisations*. Forest Policy and Economics, 100, 154-163. Link: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1389934118301606>
- Boakye-Danquah, J. (2018). *The Contributions of Model Forest Organizations towards Governance for Sustainable Forest Management of Small-scale Forests: Lessons from Eastern Ontario and Kyoto Model Forests* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Saskatchewan). Link: <https://harvest.usask.ca/handle/10388/11665>

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