

# Renowned Environmentalist: Healthy Forests Require Balance, Consensus & Intensive Management



Interview With Dr. Patrick Moore  
By Jim Gauntt

**Moore** Dr. Patrick Moore has been a leader in the international environmental field for more than 30 years. He is a co-founder of Greenpeace and served for nine years as president of Greenpeace Canada and seven years as a director of Greenpeace International.

In recent years, Moore has been focused on the promotion of sustainability and consensus building among competing concerns. In 1990, Moore founded and chaired the BC Carbon Project, a group that worked to develop a common understanding of climate change. In 1991, Moore founded parent firm Greenspirit Enterprises and serves as chair and chief scientist of Greenspirit Strategies Ltd., a communications-consulting firm that delivers strategic planning for sustainability issues.

Moore recently discussed his personal and professional background with *Crossties* and shared his thoughts on his consensus-based approach to resolving environmental, social and economic issues.

**Crossties:** For some forest products industry workers who do not yet know you or your work, it may be hard to understand how an original founder of Greenpeace came to be such an outspoken advocate for the more intensive management of our natural forest resources. By way of background for our readers, would you share with us how there is not a divergence of thought in these seemingly opposite portions of your life?

**Dr. Moore:** I was born into the forest industry as the first son of an independent logging contractor with 50 employees on the northwest tip of Vancouver Island in 1947. I grew up playing in the clear-cuts where the sun shone, unlike the deep dark dank of the rainforest all around. Soon, the berries grew for deer, bears and me. When the new young trees started to take over, it was time to move to a new clear-cut. I could see first-hand from youth that trees are renewable and don't even need help to re-grow. I also discovered that with help they could come back faster and grow quicker and produce more and better wood.

At the same time, I believe in a parks and wilderness system that preserves large areas of intact forests and other ecosystems. It is not a black and white situation. It requires balancing our desire to have wood with our desire to have wilderness.

**Crossties:** So now your focus is on consensus building between these competing concerns?

**Dr. Moore:** Yes, as noted above, it is the balance that is important. During my time with Greenpeace, the focus was on conflict and confrontation—"shock and awe," environmentalist style. This worked well at getting the public's attention. But it didn't help them with what the solution was. Consensus is about bringing all the so-called good guys and bad guys around the same

table to work on win-win solutions. This takes time—far more time than a newspaper headline or a TV sound bite. Consensus requires patience, hard work and a respect for the opposition.

**Crossties:** It has always amazed most of our members that we could be at a point in our country where managing and utilizing our own renewable resources would be assailed to the extent that it is. Why do you think we have such a hard time getting the message across that members of the forest products industry are the real stewards of the forest?

**Dr. Moore:** The political activists who have hijacked the environmental movement are using the fact that city people don't really know where their stuff comes from to vilify the very people who work in the rain and sun and wind to dig and cut and haul the very resources that the city people would die without. I have seen this pattern emerge first-hand, and it is one of the main reasons I left Greenpeace in the mid-1980s.

**Crossties:** I remember taking a tour through the Mount St. Helens blast zone just a couple of years after the eruption. The Weyerhaeuser forester told us that on the portions of the land they owned in the zone they had salvaged 600 truckloads of logs every day for one year, while the adjacent U.S. Forest Service land had been bogged down so that virtually no salvage had taken place. Yet, the species diversity and quantity between the naturally "clear-cut" and fully salvaged area and the other land where logs and ash simply laid around for years was tenfold. There seem to be some lessons here. Could you talk about how intensive management can be good for ecosystems and species diversity?

**Dr. Moore:** The lesson of Mount St. Helens is that even though nature is perfectly capable of recovering by itself after even the most devastating events, humans, with their knowledge of forest science and biology, can greatly hasten the rate of recovery.

**Crossties:** That brings me to the idea of fast-growing forests (or young forests) as a carbon trap or sink for the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide. Even if you accept the proposition that human activity, and not other factors, could be causing global warming, could you explain how healthy growing forests have an effect on the process?

**Dr. Moore:** While it is true that young forests are absorbing carbon dioxide at a faster rate than mature forests, it is also true that mature forests have a larger store of carbon dioxide than young forests. The important point is that the best policy is to grow more trees and use more wood. By growing more trees faster, we absorb more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. By using more wood, we can use less steel, concrete and plastic. That results in energy savings, and wood is made by renewable solar energy. That means less carbon dioxide into the atmosphere from burning fossil fuel to make steel, concrete and plastic.

**Crossties:** Speaking of global warming, Michael Crichton and others have made serious counter arguments to the concept of global warming as it is portrayed by environmental activists and the media. What is your take on global warming?

**Dr. Moore:** I am not a skeptic on climate change; it is getting warmer, and we may well be part of the reason. But I am not an alarmist either. The rate of change is very slow, and it may be that there are as many positive impacts as negative ones—longer growing seasons and more life in the vast tundra and arctic regions of Canada and Russia. Michael Crichton's book, "State of Fear," is a fun read, but it goes a bit far. I like his analysis of the environmental movement having become more of a religion than a science-based movement. He has stirred things up in a good way.

**Crossties:** Haven't we also learned that solar activity has been increasing for some time now and that the sun is growing hotter? Yet this doesn't seem to matter to those with the "global warming" agenda. Can you speak to that?

**Dr. Moore:** No one really knows the answer to the climate change riddle. It is probably the most difficult issue facing science today. We are definitely altering the chemistry of the earth's atmosphere to a significant extent. It would seem likely that this will have an impact on climate. Time will tell.

**Crossties:** Yet another barrier to active forest management is the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Retooling it doesn't seem likely, and yet it has been used as a hammer to frustrate private property rights. Can you share your thoughts about what is the

best course for protecting endangered species and still managing and utilizing renewable resources?

**Dr. Moore:** The ESA should be amended to contain the following principles:

It should be incentive-based rather than punitive and lawyer-based. How much sense does it make to have an ESA that causes country people to dislike endangered species? That's fine for the city people who don't have any endangered species because they killed every last one of them there. Instead of punishing property owners and people making rent on public land, there should be a tax credit, independently verified, for people who have more endangered species on their property. Then folks would encourage suitable habitat for endangered species, and before long they would not be endangered.

The city people should have to pay for the species recovery programs. First, they are mainly the ones who are concerned. Second, they have more money. And third, they aren't as inconvenienced by it as the country people are.

The country people should be involved at the outset in any recovery plan and should have a say in things, rather than facing an armed federal officer telling them they better comply with some financially ruinous order or else.

**Crossties:** Are there things we as industry members can do to help?

**Dr. Moore:** Learn about forests and forest ecology. Become ambassadors in your communities.

**Crossties:** How important is the Healthy Forest Restoration Act President Bush signed into law to the next generation of forest managers? ►

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**Dr. Moore:** The Healthy Forest Restoration Act will allow foresters to do their jobs. The federal forestlands are in managerial disarray. The key is to devolve management authority to a regional level, balancing all the services provided by the National Forest and Bureau of Land Management lands. Sure, we can make more parks. But we can't even fund the ones we have because they don't pay for themselves.

**Crossties:** The market demand for wood ties has been increasing significantly over the past few years. Every time the market demand increases, a "new" alternative product comes out of the woodwork, so to speak. The most recent influx of new product types is the composites or plastic ties. It's true that alternative materials (plastic, steel, concrete) are generally much more energy intensive to produce than wood. Would you please comment on the energy-intensive nature of the production of these types of products compared to wood?

**Dr. Moore:** Wood is made in a factory called "the forest" by renewable solar energy. Greenpeace says to "cut fewer trees." This automatically means we use less wood, which means we use more steel, concrete and plastic. What we should be doing is growing more trees and using more wood. This reduces the amount of non-renewable materials and the energy required to make them and the carbon dioxide emissions from that energy consumption.

**Crossties:** Yes, and one of the things that plastics advocate is that they remain 100 percent recyclable so that once out of track

they can be retooled for reuse once again. Notwithstanding the fact that this has yet to be proven, the biggest problems for any railroad are the logistics and costs involved in moving the products to be recycled. Are plastics as recyclable as their proponents would like us to believe?

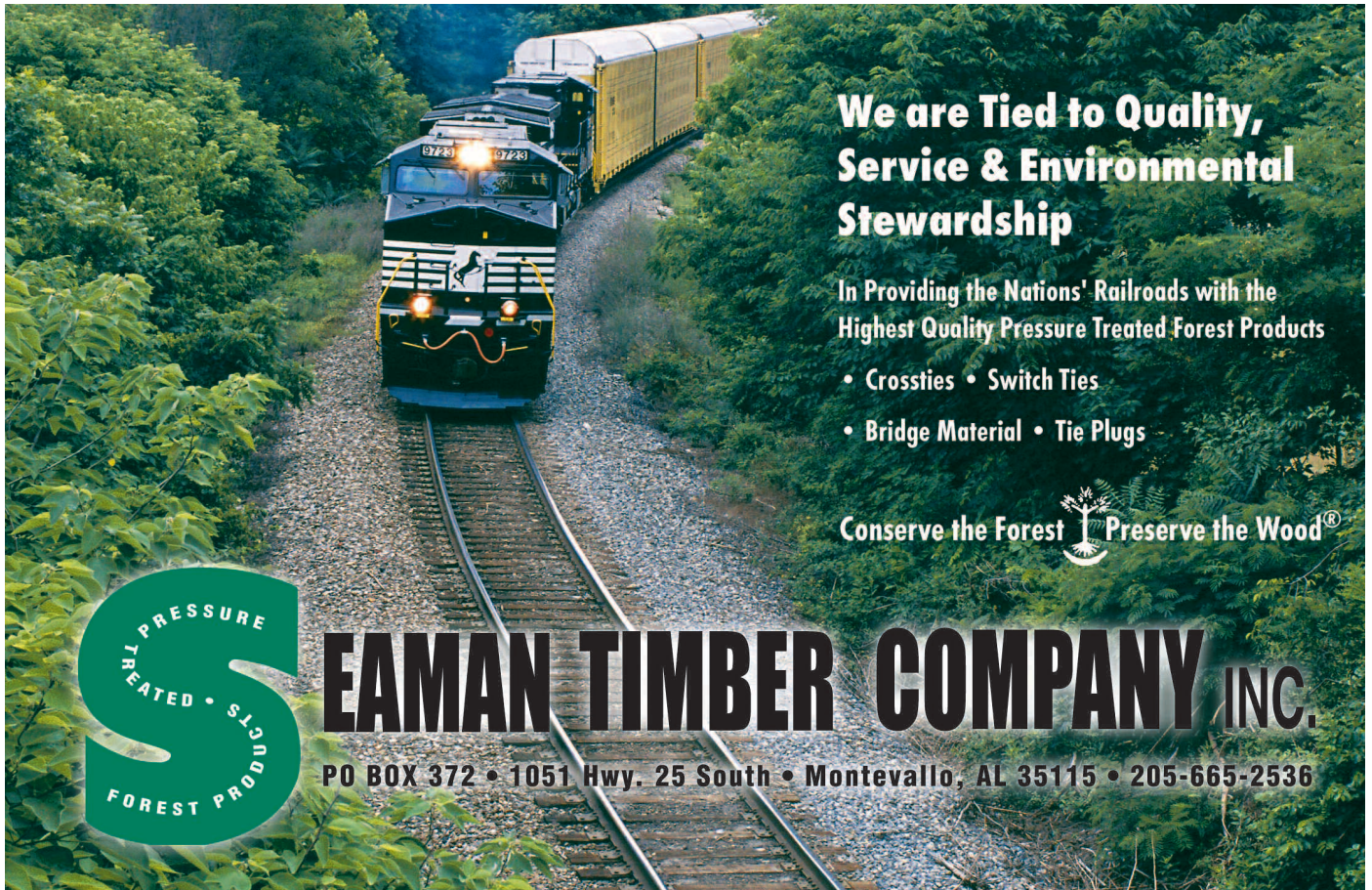
**Dr. Moore:** Most plastics are recyclable, but that doesn't necessarily mean they are being recycled. And wooden railway ties can be recycled, too, as energy in a wood waste-to-energy plant. We have not taken advantage of the opportunities to recycle combustible waste as energy. This includes much of our paper, plastic and wood.

**Crossties:** When it comes to upfront energy costs to produce, renew-ability, recycle-ability, and even disposition as a biomass fuel source, wood seems to be the "green" choice, yet that message doesn't seem to resonate with a lot of people. What can we do collectively to change that?

**Dr. Moore:** We need to mount effective communications campaigns that capture the minds of the public. Wood must become hip and chic, whereas, now it is characterized as anti-environmental and "old-fashioned." This requires a budget the size of which the forest products industry has thus far been unwilling to mount.

**Crossties:** Are there any other thoughts you would like to share with our members?


**Dr. Moore:** Become part of the solution by knowing everything about your business from the point of view of sustainability and the environment. §



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