

# Forest Conservation in Canada



**A SUMMARY OF ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES.**

**JANUARY 2004 | CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL GRANTMAKERS' NETWORK**





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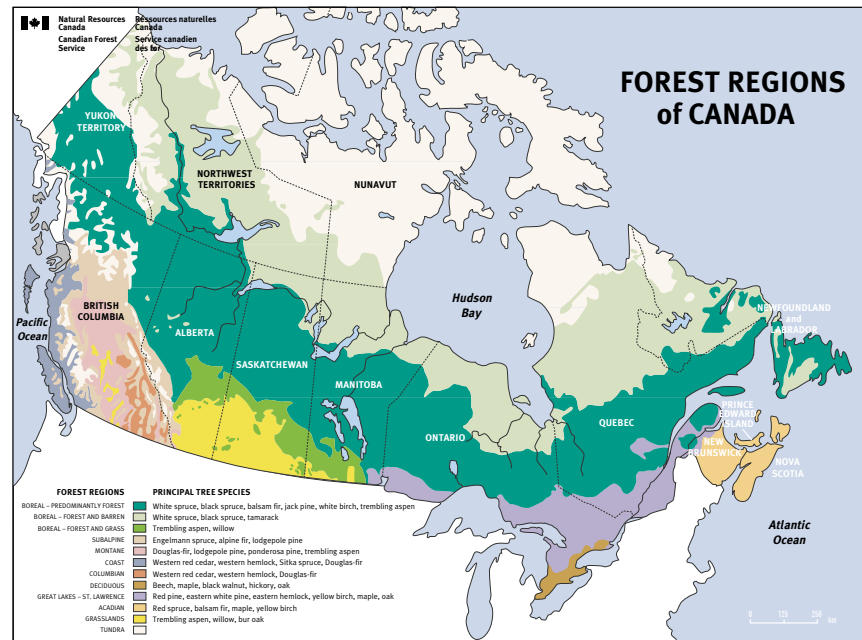




## 1 PURPOSE

This document provides background information on the issue of forest conservation and related grantmaking in Canada. It is intended to provide information and a starting point for discussion on strategic approaches and collaboration on forest issues.

## 2 IMPORTANCE OF FORESTS



### 2.1 ECOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE

- > Canada's temperate and boreal forests cover 417 million hectares, about 42% of its land mass, with 15 forested ecozones .
- > Forests provide habitat for about two-thirds of Canada's estimated 140,000 species of plants, animals and micro-organisms .
- > Forests play a key role in moderating the climate, regulating water systems, preventing erosion and alleviating air pollution.

### 2.2 ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE

- > About one million hectares is harvested annually, generating \$74 billion in revenues and \$32.6 billion to Canada's trade surplus .
- > About 300 communities in Canada are forestry-dependent.
- > Tourism industry is worth several billion dollars annually.

### 2.3 SOCIAL IMPORTANCE

- > Direct employment in the forest industry is 361,400.
- > About 80% of Canada's Aboriginal peoples live in forest communities.
- > Forests are important for recreation, domestic uses, heritage and spiritual values.

## 3 KEY PLAYERS

### 3.1 PROVINCIAL/TERRITORIAL GOVERNMENTS

- > Provinces have constitutional responsibility for natural resources; management responsibility is being devolved to territorial governments.
- > Provinces are responsible for most laws, policies and regulations affecting forests.
- > Provinces determine land use priorities, grant logging licenses, set harvest levels.
- > Municipal governments can set policies or practices to conserve trees and urban forests within their boundaries.

### 3.2 FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

- > Has legal jurisdiction in certain areas relevant to forest conservation, especially in transboundary issues such as migratory birds, fish and fisheries, and navigable waters.
- > Is responsible for international environmental and trade agreements, several of which have implications for forests.
- > Has established 41 National Parks and 48 National Wildlife Areas.

### 3.3 ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

- > Aboriginal Peoples have interests in most of Canada's forested lands, with historic treaties, modern-day treaties, ongoing negotiations and other assertions of claim.
- > Aboriginals have rights to self-government, rights to land, rights to hunt, trap and fish, customary law and cultural and religious practices.
- > Recent court decisions have determined that management activities that curtail traditional Aboriginal activities (through fragmentation or loss of habitat) impede existing Aboriginal and treaty rights, and that forestry companies have the obligation to exercise due diligence in order to ensure that Aboriginal rights are not infringed upon.
- > Aboriginal organizations (such as the National Aboriginal Forestry Association) are becoming increasingly active players, with interests in establishing and protecting Aboriginal and Treaty rights, protecting cultural and traditional uses and values, conserving the ecological integrity of their forests and participating more directly in commercial forestry.





#### 3.4 PRIVATE LANDOWNERS

- > Private holdings are a small percentage nationally (6%) but are quite significant in some regions, especially the Maritimes (92% in PEI).

#### 3.5 FOREST INDUSTRY

- > As of 2000, the top five forestry companies in Canada (by area of lands managed) are Canfor, Slocan, Tembec, Abitibi-Consolidated and Tolko/Weyerhaeuser.
- > Chief exports are softwood lumber (23%), pulp (20%) and newsprint (16%), with the United States comprising 77% of the industry's export markets.
- > Provincial governments (led by Ontario, with B.C. and N.B. following) are increasingly relying on industry self-monitoring of forestry practices.

#### 3.6 NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

- > Some of the key national NGOs in Canada that carry out forest conservation activities across the country (campaigns, research and/or on-the-ground projects) include Bird Studies Canada, Canadian Boreal Initiative, Canadian Nature Federation, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Ducks Unlimited, Global Forest Watch, Greenpeace Canada, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Sierra Club of Canada, Wildlife Habitat Canada and WWF Canada.
- > Several hundred other organizations also work on forest issues but focus mostly on provincial or local issues. Some of these groups (e.g. David Suzuki Foundation, Conservation Council of New Brunswick) are quite well-established; others rely mostly on voluntary efforts.

#### 3.7 RESEARCH ORGANIZATIONS

- > Canada is an international leader in forest research, with advanced work being done in the fields of climate change, biotechnology and pest management.
- > Research institutions include the Canadian Forest Service, the Pulp and Paper Research Institute of Canada (Paprican), Forintek (wood products research) and the Forest Engineering and Research Institute of Canada (FERIC).
- > Canada has eight university schools of forestry, many of which participate in advanced research through such entities as the Sustainable Forest Management Research Network.



## 4 MAIN ISSUES

### 4.1 PROTECTED AREAS

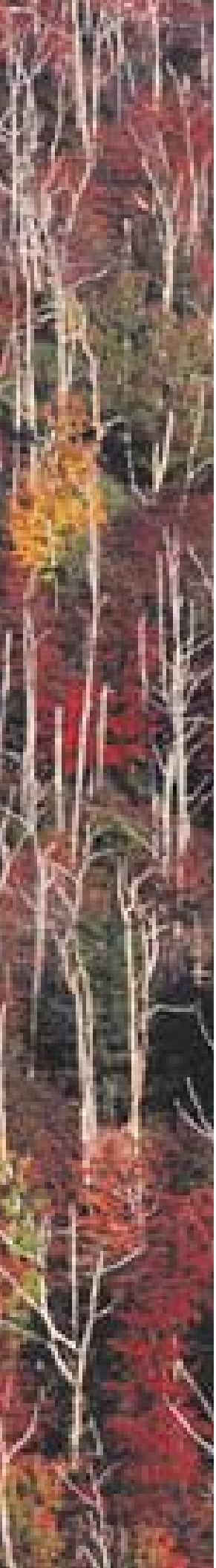
- > WWF Canada's current assessment shows that of the 437 forested natural regions in Canada only 5% are adequately represented in protected areas, 19% are moderately represented, 41% are partially represented and 35% are not represented.
- > In recent years there has been significant federal progress (with commitment to establish new and expanded national parks) as well as progress in some provinces (especially Québec). However, many of these are still “paper” commitments.
- > Increasing attention is being paid to broad-scale conservation area design and giving consideration to a variety of protection, mitigation and restoration measures across the entire landscape; including core protected areas, buffer zones, special management areas and connectivity corridors.

### 4.2 FORESTS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

- > Old growth forests once referred mainly to the ancient coastal rainforests in B.C., but is now applied more broadly to forests that are old (roughly 18% of Canada's forests) or to all forests that have never been harvested (70%).
- > In recent years there has been growing attention paid to the world's remaining intact or primary forests, about a quarter of which are located in Canada's northern boreal region.
- > The terms endangered forests or high conservation value forests are used to delineate forests that meet any of a number of criteria, including intactness, habitat for species at risk, critical importance for local needs, etc.
- > In each case special provisions need to be taken to protect the characteristics that make the forest special in the first place.

### 4.3 PLANTATIONS AND INTENSIVE FOREST MANAGEMENT

- > There has been increasing interest in using plantations and intensive forest management to reduce logging pressures in natural forests and/or to compensate for timber lost through protected area set-asides.
- > The Senate Subcommittee on the Boreal Forest recommended a “triad” approach, with 20% intensively managed, 20% protected and 60% managed primarily for biodiversity conservation.



- > The federal government is exploring an initiative called “Forest 2020,” which would promote the establishment of fast-growing plantations on marginal or abandoned farmlands.
- > There is an interest in plantations from agencies interested in buying or selling carbon credits for afforestation efforts that may arise under the Kyoto Protocol.
- > Plantations are likely to continue to be viewed critically by conservation groups, with some opposed in principle, and others whose acceptance will depend on the prior land use, the practices employed and the use to which the fibre is put.

#### 4.4 URBAN FORESTS

- > Urban forests provide tangible and intangible social, spiritual, cultural, environmental and economic benefits.
- > Municipal governments are best able to influence the protection of the urban forest, both through direct ownership of trees on public lands as well as through bylaws, policies and public education.

#### 4.5 CLIMATE CHANGE

- > The future impacts of climate change on forests are likely to include increased impacts of disease, insects, fires, severe weather events and other stressors on forest health.
- > Large unfragmented forests offer crucial opportunities for species to adapt to a changing climate and migrate into more suitable climatic regions.
- > Forests store carbon in biomass and release carbon into the atmosphere as a result of logging or natural disturbances. Where growth exceeds the losses from disturbances (such as a young regenerating forest) the forest is a net carbon sink. In primary forests being logged for the first time, however, there is a significant loss of carbon as the average age (and volume) of the forest is reduced.
- > The Kyoto Protocol will require Canada to account for carbon changes (positive and negative) due to afforestation, reforestation and deforestation. Canada has the option of accounting for all of the changes in carbon stocks across the entire managed forest. These measures could potentially support forest conservation.

#### 4.6 CONSUMPTION

- > Consumption of forest products globally continues to rise; the per capita consumption of forest products in Canada is among the highest in the world.
- > Reducing consumption is seen by many as an important component of forest conservation efforts.



## 5 CONSERVATION STRATEGIES

### 5.1 LEGISLATION

- > Species at Risk legislation (federal and provincial) has the potential to be used to protect forest habitat.
- > The Canada/U.S. softwood lumber dispute will likely affect tenure allocation and timber pricing, with potential benefits for forest conservation.
- > The Migratory Birds Convention Act prohibits actions that disturb the nests of migratory birds covered by the Act; its enforcement is currently under review.
- > Provincial and territorial legislation varies widely, and there are many other legislative tools not listed above.

### 5.2 NON-LEGISLATIVE GOVERNMENTAL INITIATIVES

- > The National Forest Strategy is prepared every five years by a coalition of government, industry and NGO interests. The current strategy (2003-08) includes a number of progressive new items with potential conservation benefits; close monitoring will be needed to encourage effective implementation.
- > Provinces are at varying stages in carrying out integrated land-use planning exercises, especially in frontier forests being allocated for the first time. The success of these initiatives depends upon high-level political will, a well-designed process and adequate resources for effective participation, especially from conservation groups and Aboriginal interests.

### 5.3 MARKET PRESSURE

- > Market campaigns are aimed at specific forestry companies as well as at major retail chains that are especially vulnerable to the risk of “brand damage.”
- > Market campaigns typically impose certain demands (“asks”), accompanied by implicit or explicit threats of damaging action if the demands are not met. While the specific demands vary, they usually involve some sort of commitment to refrain from logging in (or purchasing wood products from) “endangered” forests, and typically include a commitment to seek Forest Stewardship Council certification.







#### 5.4 CERTIFICATION

- > Forest certification offers companies independent assurance that their forest management and forestry practices meet pre-determined criteria.
- > The Canadian Standards Association system (17.9 million hectares certified in Canada) has strong requirements for public participation, but has been criticized for its lack of performance requirements.
- > The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (25.5 million ha) is an initiative of the American Forest and Paper Association, and is not considered to represent a meaningful effort due to the lack of third-party independence.
- > The Forest Stewardship Council (3.1 million ha) is the only system that has the strong support from the major conservation groups, but the supply of FSC-certified product has not been able to keep up with the demand.
- > Although certification started out as a voluntary initiative, it is quickly becoming the norm, and has been made a requirement by both the Forest Products Association of Canada for its members as well as by the government of New Brunswick for license-holders on public land in that province.

#### 5.5 ALTERNATIVE FIBRES

- > A growing number of publishers are printing books on recycled stock, with the most notable recent case being the Canadian edition of the new Harry Potter novel.
- > Agricultural wastes offer another potential source of fibre that could reduce logging pressures in natural forests.

#### 5.6 COMMUNITY-BASED FORESTRY

- > There is a growing interest in community-based forestry, although the term covers a wide range of delegation of control, from community input to active community involvement to community ownership and control.
- > Many governments have experimented with community-based forestry, mostly with limited delegation of authority, although B.C. has been more adventurous.



## APPENDIX A: REGIONAL ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

### NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

- > Large forest tenures (<1,000,000 ha) expire in 2005 and 2010
- > A wood shortage on the Island makes conservation difficult to achieve; the newly-elected Premier has promised to keep the mills supplied with wood.
- > Increasing attention will be paid on conserving old growth boreal forests on the Great Northern Peninsula.
- > A partnership between the provincial government and the Innu Nation has resulted in a genuine ecosystem-based forest management plan in Labrador.

### NOVA SCOTIA

- > Province is developing a Forest Code of Practices.
- > Growing interest in Acadian forests, with groups interested in generating momentum through an Acadian forest campaign, together with groups in P.E.I. and N.B. as well as the United States.

### PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

- > Province launched a Forest Enhancement Program designed to provide incentives for woodlot owners to consider non-timber objectives.
- > Opportunities exist to promote forest restoration on degraded lands.

### NEW BRUNSWICK

- > A government-commissioned report promotes a doubling of softwood timber supply through aggressive intensification of forestry activities.
- > There is a growing campaign for tenure reform (“Public lands in public hands”).

### QUÉBEC

- > In response to the huge impact of the scathing documentary film L'Erreur Boreale Québec's auditor general issued a similarly scathing review of forestry practices.
- > Planned and potential hydro projects (Rupert River diversion, reviving Great Whale) would have enormous negative impacts.

### ONTARIO

- > Northern Boreal Initiative will expand logging north of the existing frontier.
- > The Ontario Forest Accord's “Room to Grow” agreement delineates a compromise agreement with ensures that subsequent increases in wood supply will be shared between industry growth and establishment of new parks.
- > Recent Timber EA ruling fails to develop an old growth policy, removes requirements for government to develop access management plans and removes upper limits on clearcuts.

#### MANITOBA

- > Planning is currently underway to develop the east side of Lake Winnipeg with new roads, hydro projects, mills and logging leases.
- > Additional proposed hydro developments.

#### SASKATCHEWAN

- > Government plans to double the level of forestry activity.
- > Significant problem of understocked forests due to past logging practices.
- > Three land-use planning processes underway, showing varying degrees of promise.

#### ALBERTA

- > Serious forest fragmentation due to oil and gas exploration and development.
- > Overlapping quotas for forestry companies make it hard for private sector innovation to be effective without government cooperation.
- > Conservation hot spots in Chinchaga and Castle Crown wilderness.

#### BRITISH COLUMBIA

- > Results Based Code shifts monitoring to forest companies; moves away from prescriptive measures in previous Code.
- > Government proposing logging in parks, ostensibly to control mountain pine beetle.
- > Good models for government-led planning processes (Muskwa-Kechika) as well as market-based ones (Great Bear Rainforest).

#### YUKON

- > Forest policy under development, with a focus on smaller-scale approaches.
- > Government MOU with Kaska First Nations provides for the development of an ecosystem-based management plan for 110,000 km<sup>2</sup>.
- > Development of a new EA policy that encompasses socio-economic assessment.

#### NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

- > Mackenzie Valley pipeline promises to be a divisive issue, with some First Nations supporting it as part of a comprehensive agreement, some conservation groups supporting it in exchange for conservation commitments and others opposing the pipeline because of its role in tar sands developments.

#### NUNAVUT

- > Few forests and virtually no forestry in Nunavut.
- > Wildlife Act currently in development.



## **APPENDIX B: KEY RESOURCE MATERIAL**

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WWF Nature Audit. Toronto, 2003.  
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The first in a series of briefing papers providing an overview of key Canadian environmental issues, intended to provide background information on the issue and serve as a starting point for discussion on strategic approaches and collaboration on environmental grantmaking.

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