

FACT SHEET

## CANADA'S SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT POLICIES

Forest policies in Canada centre on the concept of sustainable forest management. Their underlying goal is to achieve a balance between the demands placed on our forests for products and benefits, and the maintenance of forest health and diversity.

Most of Canada's forest (93 percent) is publicly owned—71 percent under provincial or territorial jurisdiction and 22 percent under federal purview. The remaining seven percent is privately owned. In some parts of the country, an increasing amount of forest is coming under Aboriginal jurisdiction as land issues are settled.

The provinces and territories manage their own natural resources, including forests, except on federal lands such as First Nations reserves and national parks. Each province and territory sets the policies, legislation and other regulatory matters for its own resources. The federal government's mandate concerning forests includes managing the forests on its own lands, international trade and relations, coordinating responsibility for healthy forests, increasing Aboriginal participation, and national and international reporting obligations.

The provincial, territorial and federal governments support sustainable forest management with an array of policies, laws and regulations that address matters such as land-use planning, forest management, public consultation, Aboriginal involvement, protected areas, biodiversity, access, licensing and harvest allocation,

environmental assessment, endangered species, fishing and hunting, and forest fire prevention.

The Canadian Council of Forest Ministers (CCFM), made up of the 14 federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for forests, is an important forum for the federal, provincial and territorial governments responsible for forests to work cooperatively to address major areas of common interest. The Council provides leadership on national and international issues and sets direction for the stewardship and sustainable management of Canada's forests.

### Canada Forest Accord

In 1992 Canada became the first country to have a national forest accord between governments and non-governmental organizations, including industry and academia. The Canada Forest Accord is a formal commitment among diverse groups with different perspectives and objectives to work together on solutions to the challenges facing the forest.

The more than 50 signatories to the Accord represent a range of interests, including provinces and territories, the forest industry, conservation groups, Aboriginal peoples,

professional foresters, universities and research organizations, private woodlot owners, other land-users and other levels of government. They have formally committed to applying their knowledge, expertise and resources to sustainable forest management in a way that is appropriate to their individual circumstances and capabilities.

While the signatories have formalized their commitment to sustainable forest management, many non-signatory groups and governments are equally committed and also undertake activities that support the intent and spirit of the Accord.

### National Forest Strategy

Canada's National Forest Strategy is a roadmap for achieving the vision, principles and commitments outlined in the Accord. It is a collaborative attempt developed by representatives of a broad range of forest users to reconcile the diverse values and expectations that Canadians place on their forests. It provides a collective vision and goals to which all aspire—an important task in a country where the forest spans many regions, where forest policy and



Canada has a proven record of sound forest stewardship—with more than 90 percent of its original forest cover remaining and a growing network of protected areas that represent the country's biological diversity.

## FACT SHEET

management is decentralized, and where Canadians look to their forests for a broad range of economic, social and environmental benefits.

Like the Accord, the Strategy has been updated regularly to address new challenges, attitudes, knowledge, understanding and participation. And, like the Accord, it is up to individual organizations to decide how to meet the action items spelled out in the Strategy.

Among other things, the 2003–2008 National Forest Strategy supports an ecosystem-based approach to managing Canada's natural forest, noting that a healthy forest ecosystem is essential for a healthy society and economy. It also backs Canada's actions in improving the sustainability of communities that are economically dependent on the forest sector, accommodating Aboriginal and treaty rights, and increasing Aboriginal participation in the forest sector. As well, it recommends ways to strengthen the forest industry with increased emphasis on new product development and value-added industries.

### Canada's Leadership

Canada's role in supporting sustainable forest management extends far beyond its borders. As the first developed nation at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit to sign the Convention on Biological Diversity, Canada followed through with its own national biodiversity strategy. After the release of this strategy, it developed a national regime to protect species at risk, which includes federal species-at-risk legislation and new habitat stewardship programs, and has added significantly to its network of protected areas. Some provinces have similar legislation and programs, and all provinces and territories have also adopted protected areas strategies.

The Forestry Advisers Network of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) is an informal network of professionals concerned about the future of the forests and the people who depend on them. The Network, established in 1993,

maintains an information exchange among CIDA forestry advisers, stimulating thought on international forestry issues and allowing Internet users to learn what development initiatives CIDA has taken to meet the challenges facing the world's forests.

Canada participates in several United Nations forums, conventions and other initiatives that impact directly or indirectly on forests. One such forum is the United Nations Forum on Forests, established in October 2000 to promote the management,

### Canada Forest Accord Vision

"The long-term health of Canada's forest will be maintained and enhanced, for the benefit of all living things, and for the social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being of all Canadians now and in the future."

conservation and sustainable development of forests. Another is the North American Forest Commission (NAFC), one of six regional forestry commissions under the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. The NAFC provides a policy and technical forum for Canada, Mexico and the United States to discuss and address forest issues on a North American basis.

The Canadian Forest Service of Natural Resources Canada champions Canadian forest interests and expertise in these and other international forums and deliberations, in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, other federal departments and other interested parties such as industry, Aboriginal peoples and environmental groups.

### Tracking Progress

Canada is a founding member of the Montréal Process, created in 1994 to develop and implement internationally

agreed-upon criteria and indicators to assess and improve the conservation and sustainable management of temperate and boreal forests. At the same time, the CCFM developed criteria and indicators more applicable to Canada's circumstances. These criteria are the forest values that Canadians wish to sustain and enhance. They go beyond traditional timber values to include matters such as wildlife habitat, water quality, community stability, Aboriginal involvement, recreation and biodiversity. The indicators are scientific and other factors used to assess progress in achieving the criteria.

The CCFM criteria and indicators provide a framework for describing and measuring the state of Canada's forests, the values associated with them, forest management practices and progress in sustainable forest management. They are used to track changes and are a valuable tool for targeting research and formulating sustainable forest management policies. The six criteria are biological diversity, ecosystem condition and productivity, soil and water, global ecological cycles, economic and social benefits, and society's responsibility.

Several provinces, such as Ontario and Quebec, either have developed or are developing their own set of criteria and indicators for integration into their forest policies and legislation. Others, such as Newfoundland and Labrador, have incorporated CCFM criteria and indicators into their forest management planning processes.

### Conclusion

Sustainable forest management is a clear priority and central policy focus of Canada's provincial, territorial and federal governments. As the concept of sustainable forest management shifts and adjusts to address changing circumstances and conditions, so too do the forest policies and other initiatives designed to achieve it.