

The background of the cover is a composite of two aerial photographs. The top half shows a wide view of a mountain range with a lake in the distance under a blue sky with scattered clouds. The bottom half shows a closer view of a forested peninsula or headland meeting a dark blue lake.

British Columbia's Forests

AND THEIR MANAGEMENT

SEPTEMBER 2003



Ministry of Forests

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BRITISH
COLUMBIA

Ministry of Forests

BRITISH COLUMBIA'S FORESTS

introduction

This document provides an overview of British Columbia's forests and their management. It describes the province's forest lands, their ecological significance and their economic importance to the people of B.C. It also discusses the province's efforts to manage forests by balancing environmental interests with economic and social considerations.

That includes cooperative land use planning, which has resulted in a significant proportion of the province being set aside to protect ecological values and wildlife habitat. Outside of protected areas, large areas of forest are expected to remain in their natural state. In those areas where logging is permitted, it is managed in an attempt to conserve environmental values and address public and First Nations aboriginal interests. Annual harvest levels are set by law for each area of the province. Comprehensive forest practices regulations are in place to protect ecological values, with government enforcement as well as independent auditing by B.C.'s forest watchdog agency.

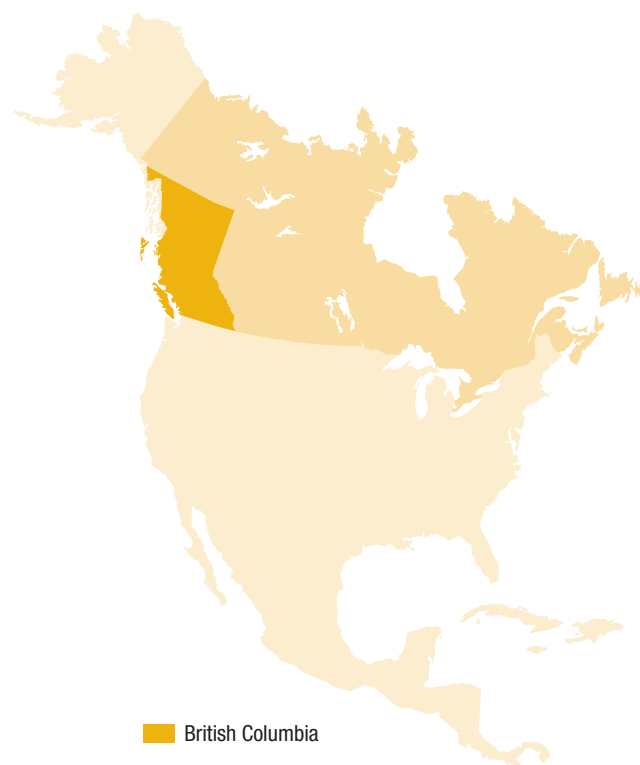
This document describes these efforts to balance conservation and sustainable development, including new legislation and policies that will shape the way B.C.'s forests are managed in the years ahead.

LAND AND PEOPLE

Photo: Tourism British Columbia



British Columbia

 British Columbia

Population: 4.1 million

Size: 95 million hectares (234 million acres)

Forest: 60 million hectares (149 million acres)

Land ownership: 95% publicly owned

Key industry: forestry

LAND AND PEOPLE

Land and People

Geography

British Columbia, Canada's western-most province, covers almost 95 million hectares (234 million acres) – larger than any European country except Russia, and larger than any U.S. state other than Alaska.

The province is characterized by abundant forests and mountainous terrain, the Pacific coastline, plateaus, and numerous waterways and lakes. Forests cover roughly two-thirds of B.C. Alpine areas make up another one-fifth of the province, and include the Coast Mountains to the west and the Rocky Mountains near the eastern border. Much of the central length of B.C. consists of a broad, dry plateau of flatlands and rolling mountains. The coast is rugged and rocky, with long fjords and numerous off-shore islands.

The influence of the ocean, mountains and other natural forces have produced a remarkably diverse landscape and climate, which ranges from the mild wet climate of the coast, to icefields in alpine regions, dry deserts in south-central B.C., and extreme cold winters in the northeast.

Ownership

The provincial government owns about 95% of the land base, and manages it in keeping with environmental, social and economic interests. Government authorizes the use of public lands for resource activities such as logging, mining and grazing, under regulations to conserve land values. Public lands also help to conserve wildlife habitat, recreation opportunities and other values.

About 5% of land is privately owned. Another 1% of B.C. is owned by the Canadian government, including national parks, military lands and Indian Reserves.



People and Economy

B.C.'s population amounts to about four million people. Roughly 70% live around the cities of Vancouver and Victoria in the southwest corner of the province, and much of the remaining population is centred around the southern valleys near the United States border or along B.C.'s major river – the Fraser. Most of the province is sparsely populated.

The economy is largely centred on natural resource development – forestry, mining, oil and gas development, hydroelectric generation and fishing, as well as agriculture. Natural resources and agricultural products account for about three-quarters of total provincial exports, most of which is forest products.

Lands and forests have important spiritual and cultural significance

Forestry is the most important industry, representing 8% of provincial Gross Domestic Product (GDP), or 15% or more of GDP when indirect and induced economic activity is included. Forestry is the principal source of income for 41% of B.C.'s regional economic areas. About 87,000 British Columbians (or 4% of total jobs) are directly employed in forestry, with about half of those in mills and other wood product manufacturing operations. When direct and induced economic activity is included, forestry accounts for an estimated 14% of B.C. employment, or about one in seven jobs. Direct forest industry payments, including fees for logging on public lands, provide about 10% of provincial government revenues.



Photo: Gary Fiegehen

First Nations

Lands and forests have important spiritual and cultural significance for aboriginal people, who make up about 3% of B.C.'s population. Forests have historically provided First Nations with everything from fish and wildlife, to drinking water, plant foods, medicines and materials to build houses, clothes and boats.

The courts recognize that First Nations have aboriginal rights and title to the use of lands and resources; however, the courts do not make a determination regarding the actual existence of such rights and title in B.C. As well, as most First Nations in B.C. do not have treaties, the B.C. and Canadian governments are working with more than 40 First Nations to negotiate treaties to clarify aboriginal rights and address social, environmental and economic issues. Treaty resolution will bring certainty regarding ownership and use of lands and resources.

In May 2000, B.C.'s first modern-day land claims agreement came into effect, with the Nisga'a Nation in northwestern B.C. The agreement set out the Nisga'a people's right to self-government, and resulted in the transfer of nearly 200,000 hectares of provincially-owned land to the Nisga'a Nation, including ownership of forest resources.

FORESTS

Forests

British Columbia's forests cover an area of about 60 million hectares (149 million acres) – the size of France and Germany combined. Most of the remainder of the province consists of alpine or other naturally unforested areas such as wetlands and grasslands. Only about 2% of B.C. has been permanently converted to agriculture, urban areas and other forms of development. That means B.C. has almost the same amount of forest as it did prior to European settlement.



Compared to most jurisdictions, B.C. is largely undeveloped, and much of the province remains as relatively pristine wilderness. The amount of roads is one measure of the level of development: about 45% of the province has less than 0.1 kilometre of road per square kilometre (equivalent to less than 0.16 miles of road per square mile).

Much of B.C.'s forests can be considered old growth forest. According to a definition developed by provincial scientists, old growth is considered more than 120 or 140 years of age for non-coastal forests, where fire is a frequent and natural occurrence; for coastal forests, where tree species are longer-lived and fire is rare, old growth is defined as trees more than 250 years of age. By this definition, an estimated 43% of B.C.'s forests are old growth – that is 25 million hectares (62 million acres), or about the size of the United Kingdom or the state of Oregon. In B.C.'s coastal rainforest, old growth accounts for more than half of the forest, with some trees reaching more than 1,000 years of age.

Old forests typically contain snags, fallen logs, and large trees not common in younger forests. Many plant and animal species require old forest habitat for some part of their life cycle. Overall, however, species benefit from a mix of forest ages across the landscape, as this offers a wide range of habitat conditions.

Forests cover two-thirds of the province, or roughly 60 million hectares. An estimated 43% of B.C.'s forests are considered old growth.

FORESTS

Ecological Diversity



B.C. is Canada's most ecologically diverse province. For example:

- > B.C. has an estimated one-fifth of the world's remaining coastal temperate rainforests. These forests stretch the length of B.C.'s coast, covering an area of about 7.6 million hectares (18.7 million acres) – about the size of Ireland or the state of South Carolina. The mild, wet climate supports species such as western redcedar, Douglas-fir, western hemlock, amabilis fir and Sitka spruce. These are among the tallest trees in the world, and can reach an enormous size in this highly productive ecosystem.
- > Dry forests of lodgepole pine, the province's most widespread tree species, dominate the gently rolling plateaus of central B.C. Like many interior (or non-coastal) forests, these pine forests depend on fire for renewal. For example, fires provide the high temperatures needed to open cones, which are sealed by a

layer of pitch, and allow seeds to escape. These forests are also subject to insect infestations: the province is now experiencing its largest-ever infestation of the mountain pine beetle, which has infested about two million hectares in the west central interior.

- > B.C.'s harsh northern climate includes slow-growing forests of spruce, aspen, pine and deciduous shrubs, interspersed with areas of black spruce bogs and alpine tundra. The boreal forests of northeast B.C. are part of the extensive belt of boreal forests that stretch across Canada.
- > The valleys of south-central B.C. are the hottest and driest in Canada. Grasslands provide habitat for some of the province's rarest plant and animal species, including desert species such as rattlesnakes. Forested zones are made up of ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir forests.
- > While interior forests are generally drier than coastal forests, there is a wet belt on the mountain slopes of southeastern B.C. These productive forests feature a wide range of tree species, including western red cedar and hemlock, which are commonly found on the coast.

These are only a few of B.C.'s 14 broad ecological zones, each of which is distinct in terms of climate, soil and vegetation. These biogeoclimatic zones are further divided into subzones and variants, depending on elevation, soil and other conditions. This ecological classification system helps forest managers to determine management practices that are best suited to the unique conditions of each part of the province.

WILDLIFE & FISH

Wildlife & Fish

British Columbia's varied landscapes and forest types support a diversity and abundance of wildlife and fish species.



- > B.C. has more than half the species found in Canada, including 70% of the country's native mammal species and breeding bird species. Altogether, B.C. has about 1,130 vertebrate species, including 142 species of mammals, 488 species of birds, 468 of fish, 22 of amphibians and 18 of reptiles.
- > The province has more large mammal species than any other part of North America, including deer, elk, moose, caribou, mountain sheep, mountain goat, gray wolf, cougar, grizzly bear, black bear and wolverine.
- > B.C. has internationally significant populations of some species, including 75% of the world's stone sheep, 60% of the world's mountain goats, one-quarter of the world's grizzly bears and bald eagles, and globally significant populations of salmon.

- > B.C. has one of the largest predator-prey systems in North America, in the Muskwa Kechika region of the northern Rocky Mountains. In this vast wilderness area, known as the "Serengeti of the North" for its abundant wildlife, carnivores such as bears, wolves and lynx prey upon caribou, sheep, bison, mountain goat, moose, elk and deer. More than six million hectares (15 million acres) of protected areas and special management zones have been designated to conserve wildlife habitat in the region.

Species at Risk

Given B.C.'s high level of biodiversity, it is not surprising that some species are threatened or endangered. This is partly due to ecological considerations: some species only occur in one small ecosystem; as well, B.C. represents the northern range of some species more commonly found in the U.S.

B.C. has made a concerted effort to assess the status of species through initiatives such as the B.C. Conservation Data Centre. Research has found that one out of ten species of vertebrate animals and plants in the province are threatened or endangered. The largest number of species at risk are found in south-central B.C. (which includes rare grassland and desert species), the southeast, and the regions around Vancouver and Victoria.

As a signatory to the National Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk, B.C. has committed to protect species and their habitats, and develop recovery plans for nationally designated species at risk. Recovery planning

LAND USE PLANNING

is now under way for species such as spotted owls, caribou, marbled murrelets and Pacific giant salamanders.

Species-specific initiatives are in place for grizzly bears and other species that are considered vulnerable in part of their range. The Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy includes a scientific panel, recovery planning, a trust fund and education efforts.

On forest land, species-specific harvesting restrictions are in place to protect important habitat for key species. So far, more than 145 Wildlife Habitat Areas have been established to conserve key habitat in forested areas.

Other initiatives include work with the U.S. to conserve trans-boundary species such as bull trout and sturgeon, and public-private partnerships to conserve natural values in some of B.C.'s most developed areas, including the Georgia Basin in the Vancouver region and the South Okanagan.



Photo: Tourism British Columbia

Land Use Planning



Land use plans have been completed in about three-quarters of the province.

With about 95% of land in public ownership, the B.C. government is responsible for managing land in the public interest, finding a balance between often-competing views on environmental, economic and social issues.

Starting in the early 1990s, B.C. launched stakeholder-based land use planning to determine how public lands should be used, including which areas should be protected, and which should be available for resource development and other uses. Four regional plans and 15 sub-regional plans have been completed through cooperative planning. Where possible, planning has represented all interests, including the B.C. government, First Nations, conservation groups,

Land use planning is a cooperative effort

forest companies, communities and recreation groups. The process has involved studying comprehensive information about the many values within the planning area, and striving to reach consensus land use recommendations for final decision by government.

As a result of land use planning, hundreds of new parks have been designated, expanding B.C.'s protected areas system from 6% of the land base to more than 12%. Another 14% of the province has been designated as special management zones, where the conservation of wildlife, recreation or other values takes precedence over resource development. In addition, lands with important resource values have been zoned for sustainable resource development, subject to provincial regulations.

Land Use Planning in the Coastal Rainforest

Planning is under way in three coastal regions: the Central Coast (sometimes referred to as the Great Bear Rainforest), North Coast and Queen Charlotte Islands (also called Haida Gwaii). All three regions include large areas of undeveloped rainforest, bear and salmon habitat, and an economy that is heavily reliant on forestry and fishing. First Nations, who make up a high proportion of the overall population, have a key role in planning. An independent science team is providing advice on the development of ecosystem-based management to balance environmental conservation and community stability. Planning on the Central Coast is the most advanced, with a preliminary land use agreement and proposed protection areas. Planning for all three regions will be complete in 2004.

Resource Management Planning

Sustainable Resource Management Planning is taking place at the landscape level, defining resource objectives and strategies based on the broad goals set through land use plans. The aim is to identify or maintain sustainable development opportunities that are consistent with environmental considerations. Resource management planning may address all resource values or only one value such as forestry, water, tourism or recreation; however, single-value plans must address implications for other resource users and values, which will be addressed over time. Planning is a co-operative partnership between government and the private sector, involving First Nations, local communities, resource companies and other interests.



PROTECTED AREAS



Protected Areas

B.C. has more than 870 protected areas, covering 12.3 million hectares (30 million acres) – an area larger than the state of Pennsylvania, or Austria and the Netherlands combined.

Roughly half of protected areas were established in the last decade or so as a result of stakeholder-based land use planning. These areas were designated with the goal of protecting the ecological and biological diversity of the province, including a range of landscapes, forest types and wildlife habitat, as well as recreational and cultural features. B.C.'s protected areas provide natural benchmarks for scientific research, and serve as outdoor classrooms to increase understanding of the natural environment. No commercial resource development is permitted in protected areas.

B.C.'s protected areas include:

Ecological diversity: In 1991, about three-quarters of B.C.'s ecosections had protection levels of less than 6%; Now, most ecosections have more than 6% protected, and one-third have more than 12% protected.

Large wilderness areas: Many of B.C.'s larger protected areas conserve extensive undisturbed ecosystems. Within these parks, natural processes prevail and intact predator-prey relationships often exist, with large mammals such as bears, wolves and cougars preying on deer, elk and other species. Protected areas exceeding a half million hectares (1.2 million acres) include Spatsizi Plateau Wilderness Park, Tweedsmuir Park, Tatshenshini-Alsek Park and Northern Rocky Mountains Park. B.C. has more than 25 parks exceeding 100,000 hectares (247,000 acres) and more than 150 larger than 5,000 hectares (12,300 acres).

Habitat: Protected areas help to preserve habitat for a range of wildlife, fish and plant species, and serve as key areas of refuge for species at risk. Recent designations include rare species in the bunchgrass ecosystem at Churn Creek, the intact coastal temperate rainforests of the Kitlope, and Canada's only grizzly bear sanctuary in the Khutzeymateen.

Forests: About 9.5% of B.C.'s forests are permanently protected, or 5.7 million hectares (14 million acres). Protection levels for older forests (greater than 140 years) are higher, with about 14% protected. More than 800,000 hectares of B.C.'s coastal temperate rainforests are protected so far, and most of this is made up of older forests.

FOREST DEVELOPMENT

Special Management Zones

Land use planning not only led to the creation of parks, it also led to the establishment of special management zones for many other areas with important ecological values. About 14% of the province has been designated for special management. Each of these areas is managed to conserve the unique values for which it was established – generally for wildlife habitat or other ecological values, or sometimes for recreation or cultural values. While management varies between each area, some resource development is usually still allowed. Although special management zones are not considered protected areas by B.C.'s standards, they contribute to the conservation of some of B.C.'s most important natural areas. Also, they are often adjacent to protected areas, helping to protect those ecological values, such as providing wildlife corridors.

B.C.'s forest management includes requirements to protect biodiversity, set annual harvest levels, and provide opportunities for First Nations and public involvement.



Photo: Gregg Eligh Photography

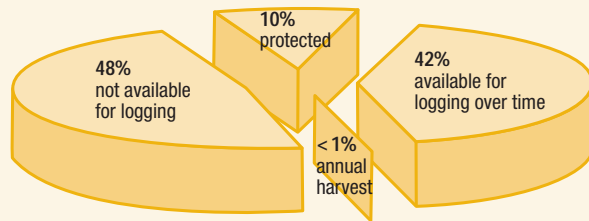
Forest Development

B.C.'s high level of public ownership means that government has significant influence in determining how and where harvesting takes place, and how much harvesting occurs. B.C.'s forest management helps ensure that all forest values are considered, that there are opportunities for First Nations and public involvement, and that there are independent processes in place to determine harvest levels and to audit forest practices.

FOREST DEVELOPMENT

Forests Available for Development

B.C.'s Forest Lands – 60 million hectares



48% not available for logging (29 million hectares)
 10% protected by legislation (6 million hectares)
 42% available for logging over time (25 million hectares)
 one third of 1% annual harvest (about 193,000 hectares)

While about 53 million hectares of B.C.'s forests are considered commercially productive, only about 25 million hectares (62 million acres) or 42% of the total forest is considered available for logging over time.

The remaining 35 million hectares (87 million acres) of forests are expected never to be harvested – an area the size of Germany or the state of Montana. These forests include about six million hectares in protected areas, and another 29 million hectares which are inaccessible or uneconomic based on current technology and markets, or not available for logging due to conservation values. This includes forests along large fish-bearing streams, steep slopes unsuitable for harvesting, areas that have been set aside to protect habitat for species at risk, and forests with important old growth values. In addition to maintaining ecological values, these forests also provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and other uses.

Tenure System

Private forest companies, communities and individuals gain the right to harvest timber in public forests through tenure agreements with the provincial government.

Under a tree farm licence (TFL), for example, a company has rights to harvest timber in a specified area. Companies are required to pay government stumpage fees (for timber harvested in public forests) and annual rent, ensuring that British Columbians benefit from the development of public forests. Companies with TFLs also have significant forest management responsibilities, including preparing five-year management plans, operational plans, road building and reforestation.

Other tenures, such as forest licences, provide rights to log a specific amount from a given area in exchange for payment of stumpage and forest management responsibilities such as road building and reforestation. Another kind of tenure makes timber available to small business loggers, small sawmill owners and independent manufacturing facilities through a competitive award system. There are also community based tenures.

All harvesting in public forests must abide by B.C.'s forest practices regulations and be within allowable annual cut levels determined by law.

HARVEST LEVELS

Forest Products and Markets

B.C. produces lumber, pulp and paper as well as oriented strand board, plywood, cedar shakes and shingles, newsprint and value-added wood products. Non-coastal production is largely made up of dimensional lumber produced in large, modern mills. The smaller coastal industry produces lumber and higher-value products such as flooring and doorframes.

More than 90% of B.C.'s forest products are exported, with about 65% of exports going to the U.S. – largely dimensional lumber for house construction and remodelling. Other important markets are Japan (16%) and the European Union (9%).

B.C.'s forest product exports account for about 5% of world exports of forest products, and its pulp exports represent 12.5% of world exports. The province is the single largest exporter of softwood lumber in the world.



Photo: Candace Kenyon

Harvest Levels**Determining Harvest Levels**

By law, decisions on the volume of wood that can be logged – called the allowable annual cut (AAC) – must be set for major management areas of public forest. That involves 37 timber supply areas and 34 tree farm licences as well as smaller woodlot areas that include public land, and community forest agreements. B.C. law requires that AACs be determined every five years, unless information indicates that no changes to harvest levels would be needed.

AAC decisions are made by B.C.'s Chief Forester, who uses his independent professional judgement based on the best available information. This information is collected and prepared through the timber supply review process. Computer analysis is used to examine how the timber supply may be affected by recent land use decisions, current forest practices requirements, objectives for non-timber values and other factors. The process is open and transparent, and includes public review and input, as well as consultation with First Nations. The purpose is to ensure that the short-term AAC is consistent with long-term sustainability of the timber supply, the interests of First Nations and the public, and policies and practices that may affect the timber supply.

Together with other initiatives and policies, this process provides assurances that large amounts of forest will be conserved for generations to come, and that timber will be available to support future opportunities for the forest products industry.

B.C. law requires that annual harvest levels be set for public forests

Photo: Candace Kenyon



Annual Harvest Levels

Each year, an average of about 193,000 hectares (477,000 acres) of B.C. forest is logged, amounting to roughly 75 million cubic metres of timber. About 70% of the harvest comes from B.C.'s interior, and the remainder from coastal areas.

About 90% of logging takes place in public forests, where annual harvest rates average 184,000 hectares (455,000 acres), or roughly 65 million cubic metres of timber. That area amounts to one-third of one per cent of total public forest, or 0.8% of the forest area considered available for harvest.

Harvesting on B.C.'s one million hectares (2.5 million acres) of privately managed forest land averages about 9,000 hectares (22,000 acres) a year, or 8 million cubic metres. This harvest rate represents about 0.9% of B.C.'s privately managed forest.

Due to B.C.'s relatively short history of logging, most logging still takes place in forests that have never been harvested, including older forests. This will change over time as more second growth (or previously harvested) trees reach an appropriate size for harvesting.

Long-Term Harvest Levels

The total area harvested on public lands is expected to remain relatively constant at the current level over the long term. However the volume of timber harvested is expected to change.

In the mid-term, the volume of timber logged is expected to decline somewhat as logging shifts from primary reliance on old forests to second growth (or previously harvested) forests, a transition that will take many decades. This decline is largely due to the fact that large amounts of second growth forest will not be mature enough to harvest in the mid-term.

Each year, less than one-third of one per cent of public forests are logged.

In the long term, B.C.'s timber harvest landbase is expected to support an overall harvest volume equivalent to or possibly higher than current levels. These projections are supported by recent research on growth rates, which suggests regenerated forests often show much higher productivity than the older forests now being harvested.

FOREST PRACTICES

Forest Practices

Forest practices on public lands are undergoing a major regulatory change. The Forest Practices Code, which used a highly prescriptive and regulatory approach, is being phased out. The new Forest and Range Practices Act, developed with the benefit of an open and independent consultation process, will deliver the same level of environmental protection in a more efficient and effective manner. Under this new approach, government will set objectives to conserve forest values, and forest companies will determine how best to meet those objectives, with monitoring and enforcement to ensure that those outcomes are achieved. The new legislation is scheduled to come into effect in January 2004 and be fully implemented within a few years.

While most of B.C.'s regulations apply to public forest lands, privately-managed forests are also subject to legally specified forest practices standards for water quality, soil conservation, fish habitat, critical wildlife habitat and reforestation.



Photo: Gregg Eligh Photography



Photo: Candace Kenyon

Objectives for Forest Values

Under the new Forest and Range Practices Act, clear outcomes or objectives will be set in regulations to sustain the full range of forest values – soils, visual quality, timber, forage, water, fish, wildlife, biodiversity, recreation, resource features and cultural heritage resources. Regulations will also include default results or strategies for some values, such as riparian (streamside) management and soil conservation. In addition, forest development must be in keeping with legal objectives from land use plans, helping to conserve the unique values of each area.

For example, one aspect of maintaining biodiversity is the retention of old growth forests. Government objectives will determine the minimum amount of old growth that must be retained, depending on the natural disturbance type of the ecosystem, as well as the biodiversity emphasis level of the particular area. For example, an area of the Sub-Boreal

FOREST PRACTICES

Pine Spruce zone with a low biodiversity emphasis may have a 7% old growth retention requirement, while a portion of the Mountain Hemlock zone with a high biodiversity emphasis may require 28% old growth retention. B.C. is believed to be the only jurisdiction in North America, and perhaps the world, to have jurisdiction-wide, legal requirements for the protection of old growth forest ecosystems. Government and industry are working together to spatially locate old growth management areas that achieve these retention requirements.



Planning

Prior to harvesting, forest companies must develop a Forest Stewardship Plan specifying how forest values will be conserved, and identifying, on a map, the areas where harvesting is planned. The plan must provide measurable and enforceable results or strategies to meet government-set objectives for biodiversity, wildlife habitat and other forest

values. That involves determining how to address the unique values of the area – whether it is old growth, recreation, wildlife habitat or all of these. As well, plans must address the values identified through land use planning, such as sites that may provide important habitat for certain wildlife species.

This approach gives forest companies and the resource professionals they hire more freedom to manage, and more opportunity to use innovation and expertise. It also places more reliance on science-based assessments and advice to inform management decisions. In keeping with this, B.C. has introduced new legislation that holds resource professionals, including foresters, agrologists and biologists, more accountable for the plans they help prepare. This includes new legislation to register and license biologists, which may be the first of its kind in the world.

Public and First Nations Involvement

Forest Stewardship Plans must demonstrate that requirements for public review have been met and that comments received have been addressed. In addition to public review and comment, the province is obliged to address aboriginal interests in decision-making processes. This involves consultation with First Nations. The province has developed consultation policies and guidelines that help guide decisions of government, including those related to the approval of Forest Stewardship Plans.

B.C. has emerged as a North American leader in certification



Enforcement

The results and strategies described in an approved Forest Stewardship Plan form the basis for compliance and enforcement, along with several on-the-ground practices requirements. Government's enforcement program conducts thousands of annual inspections, showing a compliance rate of more than 97% with existing forest practices regulations. Under the new legislation, fines for non-compliance have substantially increased – in some cases doubling in amount. Also, enforcement staff will have new powers to intervene and stop work where there is a risk of damage occurring.

Forest Certification

Almost all major forest companies operating in B.C. have chosen to pursue forest certification as a way to demonstrate their commitment to sustainable management. B.C. has emerged as a North American leader in certification. Most major companies have met the requirements of the ISO environmental management system as a first step to pursuing independent third-party forest certification. A total of 9.5 million hectares (23 million acres) in B.C. is certified under the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, which includes principles, objectives and performance measures for forest management. Another 5.3 million hectares (13 million acres) is certified under the Canadian Standards Association, which includes forest management performance measures developed through public consultation. So far, 89,000 hectares (220,000 acres) has been certified under the Forest Stewardship Council; that may increase now that regional FSC standards have been completed.



FOREST PRACTICES BOARD

Forest Practices Board

In addition to government enforcement, B.C. also has an independent watchdog agency that oversees forest practices.

The Forest Practices Board is similar to an Auditor General or Ombudsman for the forest. Its role includes:

- > Auditing forest companies, chosen at random by the Board, for compliance and enforcement with forest practices requirements.
- > Auditing government's enforcement of forest practices requirements.
- > Addressing concerns and complaints from the public about forest planning and practices and government enforcement.
- > Conducting special investigations of important forestry issues.

As a result of its investigations and audits, the Board issues public reports making recommendations for improvement to both industry and government. Annual reports further comment on the state of forest practices in B.C. The Board also has the authority to comment and make recommendations on forest practices that may comply with the law, but which the Board considers unsound.

The Board's independent fieldwork and reports have shown measurable, on-the-ground improvements in forest practices over the past 10 years: better protection of streams from harvesting, smaller cutblocks with more trees left on-site, less disturbance resulting from logging, better construction and maintenance of logging roads and more deactivation of logging roads. However, the Board notes there is important work that still needs to be completed.

Supporting Continuous Improvement

Efforts to ensure that forest practices regulations are effective and to support continuous improvement include:

- > Forest Practices Board will continue its role as an independent watchdog for sound forest practices.
- > Effectiveness evaluations and reporting will determine if government-set objectives are being delivered.
- > Resource professionals within and outside of government are developing best management practices consistent with objectives for forest values.
- > Pilot projects will continue to provide information on innovative ways to undertake planning and practices to achieve objectives.
- > Forest practices advisory council, with representation from various interest groups, will undertake periodic reviews and make recommendations for change.



REVITALIZATION PLAN

That includes better protection for environmental values such as wildlife, scenery and recreation at the landscape level.

The Board will be auditing progress during the transition to the Forest and Range Practices Act. Board audits and investigations will determine whether the intended results are achieved, and its findings will be publicly released.

Revitalization Plan

Government's forest policies continue to evolve and adapt to changing circumstances. Major changes are being made to policies and legislation to build a stronger, more globally competitive forest sector, while maintaining environmental standards. Changes will revitalize and diversify the industry, and create more opportunities in harvesting and manufacturing.

Changes include:

- > New forest practices regulations will improve efficiency and effectiveness.
- > Government is re-allocating existing logging rights to make more timber available for First Nations, communities and smaller operators, encouraging long-term economic development.
- > Policy changes will allow market forces to drive commercial decisions, resulting in competitive markets for standing timber, logs and harvesting rights.
- > Designation of a "working forest" outside of protected areas is expected to increase certainty for all users of public forests, including companies, workers and communities.
- > More effort is being devoted towards building and maintaining markets for B.C. forest products.



Photo: Gary Fiegehen

First Nations

First Nations are increasingly turning to forests as a means of economic development. An increasing number of First Nations own – either wholly or in partnerships – a range of harvesting and manufacturing operations. New initiatives will encourage more First Nations involvement:

- > Government is increasing the share of timber available to First Nations to 8% of the provincial harvest (from about 3%), which is reflective of the aboriginal population in rural areas. This amounts to a total of 5.6 cubic metres of timber. Recent legislative changes enable the Minister of Forests to directly award harvesting rights to First Nations without going through a competition process.
- > New mechanisms are being developed to share a portion of forest revenues with First Nations, amounting to \$95 million over the next three years.

This is in addition to First Nations' ongoing participation in all major forestry programs, including silviculture, timber supply reviews and land use planning. These initiatives work towards addressing First Nations aboriginal interests, providing economic benefits for communities, and building skills and expertise.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For More Information

B.C. Forests & their Management: www.growingtogether.ca or
www.bcforestinformation.com

Biogeoclimatic Ecosystem Classification:
<http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hre/becweb/index.htm>

Wildlife and Fish: <http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/wld/>

Species at Risk: <http://srmwww.gov.bc.ca/atrisk/>

Land Use Planning:
<http://srmwww.gov.bc.ca/rmd/lrmp/index.htm>

Protected Areas: <http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/>

Special Management Zones:
<http://srmwww.gov.bc.ca/rmd/snz/index.htm>

Revitalization Plan: <http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/mof/plan/>

Allowable Annual Cut: <http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hts/>

Forest Practices: <http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/code/>

Forest Practices Board: <http://www.fpb.gov.bc.ca/>



Photo: Candace Kenyon

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Photo Credits

Moresby Consulting: cover, boom boat & aerial;

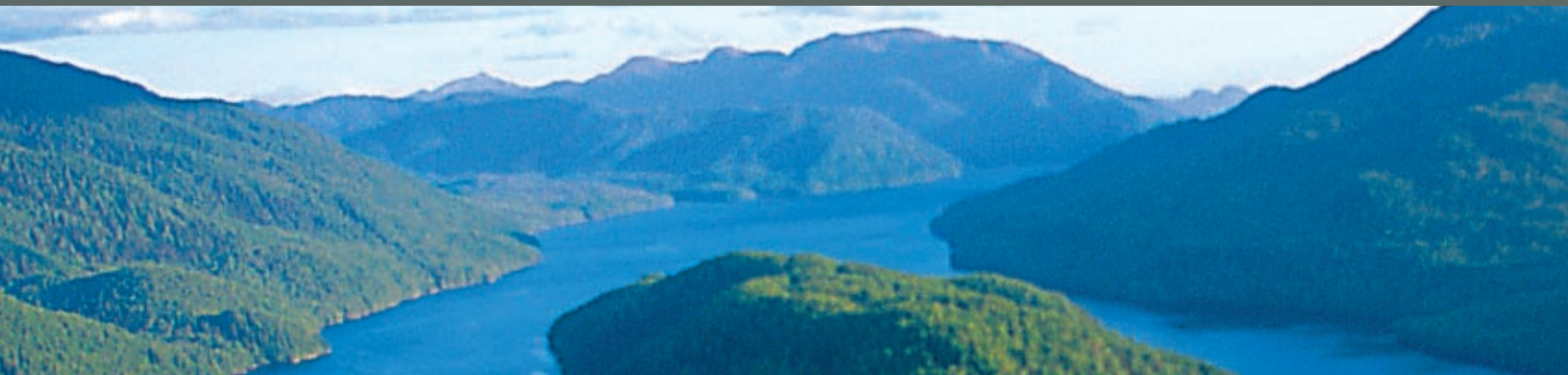
Candace Kenyon: old growth;

Ministry of Forests: stream & mill worker; Tourism British Columbia: lake;

Glen Golbeck, Hayes Forest Services Limited: helicopter.



Ministry of Forests



BRITISH COLUMBIA'S APPROACH

CONSERVE VAST AREAS OF FOREST

BALANCE ENVIRONMENTAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL VALUES

INVOLVE BRITISH COLUMBIANS IN DECISION-MAKING

STRIVE FOR CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT IN FOREST MANAGEMENT

WELCOME INDEPENDENT OBSERVATION