

Sustainable Forest Management

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British Columbia Forest Facts

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A fraction of 1% of British Columbia's forests are harvested annually.

WORLD-LEADING FOREST PRACTICES AND POLICIES

In the last decade, British Columbia has established itself as a leader in forest management through stringent forest policies and innovative forest practices that continue to evolve to meet current needs and reflect the most recent scientific knowledge.

British Columbia's Forest and Range Practices Act is a world-leading model of forest management regulation that has long been advocated by policy experts. It legislates on-the-ground results rather than process, and is built on a foundation of professional skills and accountability.

Forest companies operating in the province consider it critical to meet or exceed the high standards demanded by their customers, the community and the government. They are world leaders in third-party certification, which provides added assurance of sustainable forest management.

Canada and the United States manage forests sustainably, ensuring they are there for future generations to be used for the many things that society values; including recreation, wildlife habitat, biodiversity, and forest products. All major forest certification programs in North America are recognized by companies and governments around the world.





REGULATING FOREST PRACTICES

About 95 per cent of British Columbia's forests are publicly owned, and priorities for the use of these lands are developed through community based strategic land and resource management planning.

British Columbia's results-based forest regulations ensure public lands provide a mix of benefits such as timber, recreational opportunities, water quality, wildlife habitat, and countless others identified through the public planning process. The Forest and Range Practices Act is designed to deliver a careful balance of economic and environmental benefits across the landscape simultaneously, and not one to the exclusion of the other.

The Forest and Range Practices Act requires that licensees prepare forest stewardship plans that show how operations will be consistent with objectives set by government for soils, timber, wildlife, water, fish, biodiversity and cultural heritage resources. The plans also indicate generally where forest development will be taking place. Before government approves the plan, companies must invite and consider public and First Nation comments.

In addition, the regulatory regime specifies requirements to conserve soils, provide sustainable reforestation, and to protect riparian areas, fish and fish habitat, watersheds, biodiversity, and wildlife. It

specifies requirements for construction, maintenance and deactivation of forest roads.

British Columbia is well positioned to move to results-based regulations for many reasons, including a well-established public process that sets management objectives for public forests and skilled resource professionals. It has a multi-faceted compliance and enforcement regime that concentrates on the highest-risk activities, with both routine and random audits, with publicly reported results.

An independent academic study found that British Columbia has some of the most stringent forest practices regulations in the world.



ENSURING A SUSTAINABLE HARVEST

British Columbia's chief forester is required by law to determine how much wood can be harvested from each of the province's 70 management units. This timber supply review process is independent, and involves a detailed technical analysis, public comment and consideration of forest resource values such as wildlife and fish habitat, soils, water and recreational opportunities.

The determinations are required at least once every five years, which ensures that harvest levels are based on the latest information, practices and government policies, both economic and environmental. The chief forester can postpone a timber supply review if circumstances have not changed significantly or set a new harvest level earlier to deal with abnormal situations such as an insect epidemic.

The timber supply review is the foundation of British Columbia's sustainable forest management, considering ecological values while allowing stable economic benefits for communities.

British Columbia's world-leading model of forest management regulation delivers a careful balance of economic and environmental benefits across the landscape.

MAINTAINING NATURAL FORESTS

Forest companies licensed to harvest public land in British Columbia reforest each site with native species suited to meet local and anticipated future ecological conditions. They remain responsible for a harvested area until there is assurance it will grow into a new, healthy forest.

A diverse forest ecosystem is more resilient and supports habitat for a wider variety of species. This resilience is one way British Columbia is responding to the changing ecological conditions expected with climate change.

Resource managers maintain diversity, often by planting three to five native tree species on a site

and combining this with natural regeneration. This forest management approach means British Columbia does not have intensively managed forests that meet the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's definition of plantation.

Each year about 200 million seedlings are planted in British Columbia to reforest areas after logging, wildfire or insect infestations. The province planted its seven billionth seedling in 2013.

British Columbia is a world leader in research aimed at finding the best trees for forest regeneration. It uses superior seed and seedlings

from natural wild stands and seed orchards – it does not use any genetically modified trees.

Forest companies must reforest sites they log on public land, and remain responsible for a harvested area until there is assurance it will grow into a new, healthy forest.



MEETING THE NEEDS OF EACH SITE

Long before a tree is cut, resource professionals identify the silvicultural system that best meets the unique needs of each site. A silvicultural system covers all activities from early planning through harvesting, replanting and tending the new trees.

While it is important to achieve the highest commercial value from any harvesting, it is just as important to conserve all forest values. This means identifying reserves to protect scenery and keep silt out of waterways, timing the harvest to avoid soil damage, ordering seedling stock well in advance, and much more.

Clearcutting, which removes most of the trees from an area and leaves patches and buffers to protect other values, is often used because it is best suited to the ecology of

sites with species such as lodgepole pine and Douglas-fir that thrive in full sunlight. When used appropriately, clearcutting is less disruptive because the site is left to grow once it is regenerated. Stumps, branches and fallen trees are left on the forest floor after harvesting to maintain biodiversity and provide habitat.

Other harvesting techniques that remove some of the trees, such as retention or selection cutting, are used in specific situations including areas where soils are dry or terrain is unstable, or where clearcutting may affect scenery, wildlife habitat, old-growth areas or other values.

Some of British Columbia's most beautiful landscapes are protected. In many areas where

harvesting is permitted, resource managers make sure it follows the pattern of the natural landscape to reduce the visual impact during the time it takes the forest to regenerate.



PROTECTING WILDLIFE

British Columbia is home to 1,100 species of birds, fish, mammals, amphibians and reptiles; some found nowhere else in Canada. Under its Identified Wildlife Management Strategy, special consideration is provided for 85 wildlife species, subspecies and populations that have been legally established as species at risk under the Forest and Range Practices Act. Under the strategy, government officials designate and map wildlife habitat areas for a particular species or plant community, and legally establish specific management practices that must be followed.

British Columbia currently has more than 1,186 approved wildlife habitat areas, covering a total of more than 1 million hectares (2.5 million acres), as well as more than 6.2 million hectares (15.3 million acres) set aside to manage winter habitat for ungulates such as mountain goats or Stone sheep.

CONTINUALLY IMPROVING PRACTICES

The Forest and Range Practices Act is designed to maintain British Columbia's high environmental standards while encouraging innovative forest practices. The provincial government created a science-based Forest and Range Evaluation Program to ensure practices under the act achieve sustainable forest management and to support continuous improvement.

Each year, the list of priority evaluation questions that guides the monitoring and evaluation activities is updated with input from resource professionals, researchers and the public. Experts will analyze data collected at hundreds of randomly selected sites across the province to identify issues and recommend ways to improve forest practices. The results are peer reviewed and final reports made publicly available.

SOURCES

MINISTRY OF FORESTS, LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCE OPERATIONS

Forest and Range Practices Act
www.for.gov.bc.ca/code

Forest and Range Evaluation Program
www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfp/frep

Compliance and Enforcement
www.for.gov.bc.ca/hen

Forest Harvesting
www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfp/publications/00062

The State of British Columbia's Forests
www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfp/sof

Timber Supply Review
www.for.gov.bc.ca/hts

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT
Identified Wildlife Management Strategy
www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/frpa/iwms



About 50% of wood products exported from Canada come from the Province of British Columbia's sustainably-managed forests. This publication is part of the 'Forest Facts' series, published by Forestry Innovation Investment. Visit www.naturallywood.com for details.

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British Columbia wood. Sustainable by nature. Innovative by design.