

Forestry in Ontario

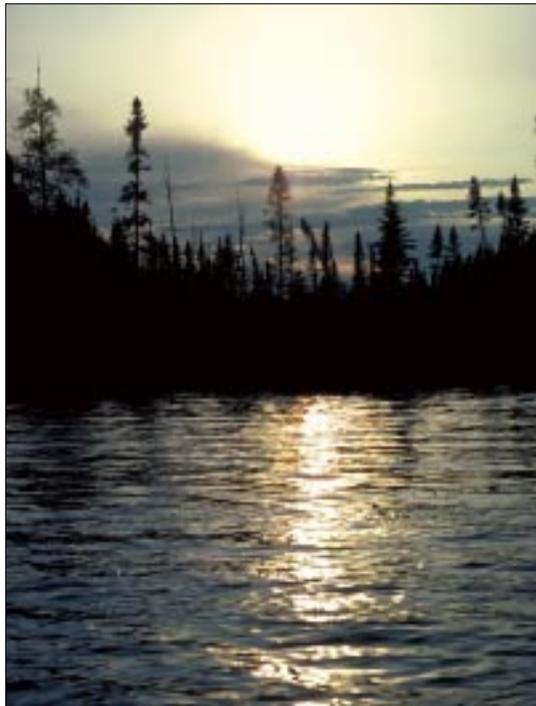
Wildlands League
a chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society

This series of fact sheets has been produced to increase public understanding of forestry in Ontario and to present innovative ideas on how it can be improved. Forestry is the single largest use of public lands in Ontario and forestry activities can have a major impact on ecosystems. The Wildlands League is committed to improving forestry practices and reducing the ecological impact of logging by working directly with government and industry and by improving public awareness and involvement in forestry issues.

Boreal Forest Certification

ONTARIO'S BOREAL FOREST

The boreal forest covers 43 million hectares of land in Ontario.¹ It is a dynamic ecosystem that is dominated by white and black spruce, jack pine, balsam fir, trembling aspen, balsam poplar and white birch. Natural disturbances, such as fire and insect outbreaks, along with natural succession, shape the boreal forest into a diverse mosaic of forest types and ages. The boreal forest represents one of the world's best remaining opportunities to protect intact wilderness and the species that depend on it. The boreal forest is also important to the livelihood, culture and spirituality of Aboriginal peoples and provides a critical source of income for forest-dependent communities. The forest industry relies on the boreal region for over 90% of the wood volume cut in Ontario each year.²



Ontario's boreal forests are one of the world's greatest frontier forest regions.

KEY ISSUES

Loss of habitat: The rate and intensity of logging in Ontario's boreal forests can lead to the loss of critical habitat for wildlife. In particular, the declining amount of older forests and forest types that are difficult to renew after logging threatens populations of plants and animals that depend on these habitats for survival.

Impacts of roads: Logging requires an extensive road network, which fragments large forest areas into smaller and less ecologically valuable habitat blocks, and allows people to access previously undisturbed areas for hunting and fishing. This threatens fish and wildlife populations and allows for unauthorized uses, such as garbage dumping.⁶

Water quality: Roads and harvesting near the shore can lead to sediment running into lakes

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Logs dumped along the shoreline during logging damages habitat and creates waste.

and rivers and a general deterioration of water quality. Large areas logged around a lake can also have a negative impact on water quality and hydrology.⁸

Economic sustainability and community benefits:

The current level of industrial logging in Ontario exceeds the level that can be naturally sustained over the next 50 years.¹⁰ The focus on high-volume logging of species such as spruce to produce exports like paper and wood pulp has resulted in a highly mechanized logging industry that employs fewer people than in past decades while cutting more wood.^{7,9} This is a damaging trend because many northern communities depend on forestry as their main source of employment and logging activities can also jeopardize other forest uses like trapping and tourism. It is important that forestry engages and benefits local people, allows a diverse economy, and is sustainable over the long term.

Respect for Aboriginal and treaty rights: Ontario's boreal forest region is home to many Aboriginal peoples, who assert that decisions about forestry development have often violated Aboriginal and treaty rights. This

has meant extensive logging of traditional Aboriginal lands with little control or input from the communities affected.

WHAT IS THE FOREST STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL?

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), founded in 1993 with strong support from environmental organizations, is an international organization that has emerged as a dominant player in forest certification with over 24 million hectares of forest certified worldwide⁵. Forest certification is a voluntary process that can help forest companies demonstrate to consumers that they are practicing good forest management. FSC standards encourage forest companies to protect the forest, recognize Aboriginal and treaty rights and create benefits for local communities.

The FSC has developed 10 guiding Principles and an accompanying list of criteria that apply globally to any forest wanting to become certified.³ The Principles and Criteria are further interpreted through the development of regional standards that reflect local environmental, social and economic conditions.⁴ In Canada, regional standards development requires equal participation from four chambers: Social, Indigenous Peoples, Economic and Environmental.

For a forest area to become FSC certified, the forest company operating in the area must have its plans and operations certified as conforming with the appropriate regional FSC standards by an independent FSC-accredited certifier. Once a forest is FSC certified, the wood that is cut from it can be labeled with the FSC logo, allowing



Roads fragment large forest blocks and reduce intact habitat. Roaded and clearcut forest (top) and intact boreal forest (bottom).

FSC PRINCIPLES AND CRITERIA

Principle #1: Compliance with Laws and FSC Principles

Forest management shall respect all applicable laws of the country in which they occur, and international treaties and agreements to which the country is a signatory, and comply with all FSC Principles and Criteria.

Principle #2: Tenure and Use Rights and Responsibilities

Long-term tenure and use rights to the land and forest resources shall be clearly defined, documented and legally established.

Principle #3: Indigenous People's Rights

The legal and customary rights of indigenous peoples to own, use and manage their lands, territories, and resources shall be recognized and respected.

Principle #4: Community Relations and Workers' Rights

Forest management operations shall maintain or enhance the long-term social and economic well-being of forest workers and local communities.



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Principle # 5: Benefits from the Forest

Forest management operations shall encourage the efficient use of the forest's multiple products and services to ensure economic viability and a wide range of environmental and social benefits.

Principle #6: Environmental Impact

Forest management shall conserve biological diversity and its associated values, water resources, soils, and unique and fragile ecosystems and landscapes, and, by so doing, maintain the ecological functions and the integrity of the forest.

Principle #7: Management Plan

A management plan — appropriate to the scale and intensity of the operations — shall be written, implemented, and kept up to date. The long term objectives of management, and the means of achieving them, shall be clearly stated.

Principle #8: Monitoring and Assessment

Monitoring shall be conducted — appropriate to the scale and intensity of forest management — to assess the condition of the forest, yields of forest products, chain of custody, management activities and their social and environmental impacts.

Principle 9: Maintenance of High Conservation Value Forests

Management activities in high conservation value forests shall maintain or enhance the attributes which define such forests. Decisions regarding high conservation value forests shall always be considered in the context of a precautionary approach.

Principle # 10: Plantations

Plantations shall be planned and managed in accordance with Principles and Criteria 1 - 9, and Principle 10 and its Criteria. While plantations can provide an array of social and economic benefits, and can contribute to satisfying the world's needs for forest products, they should complement the management of, reduce pressures on, and promote the restoration and conservation of natural forests.

buyers to recognize the product as coming from a well-managed forest.

The key to the FSC's success is its independence and the support it receives from the environmental, aboriginal and business communities. The independence of certifiers, the meaningful participation of stakeholders and Aboriginal people in standards development, a focus on performance rather than process, and a system for tracking and verifying certified products makes the FSC stand out as a credible leader in forest certification.



Northern pitcher plant

Lori Labatt

WHAT IS HAPPENING WITH FSC CERTIFICATION IN ONTARIO?

The Ontario Boreal Pilot Project is currently developing certification standards for Ontario's boreal region. A working group consisting of key individuals and organizations from each of the FSC's four chambers has been established. If the working group is successful, it will arrive at a consensus for a standard based on the FSC's principals and criteria that will lead the way toward sound forest management in the boreal forest. Because of the equal participation of all chambers, the FSC is today's best forum for creating forest management that respects ecological integrity, environmental



A goal of FSC certification is to protect habitat and biodiversity.

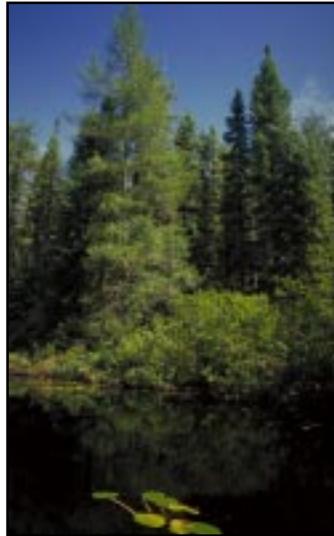
Gary McGuffin

impacts of logging, Aboriginal and treaty rights and community sustainability. This standard must address the impacts of forestry operations and emphasize the long-term protection of our forest resources. (An early draft of the standard is available at www.wildlandsleague.org/borelfsc.pdf) Once the boreal standard has been completed, any company wishing to obtain FSC certification in Ontario's boreal forest will need to prove that its practices meet the standard. Ontario's boreal standard will also be used as input to a national standard for the boreal forest.

A draft standard for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Forest region was developed in the late 1990s (see www.wildlandsleague.org/gsl.pdf) and is now being used.

By purchasing wood from Ontario that carries the FSC logo, the public will know that the forest it was cut from is well managed and meets FSC requirements.

Fact sheet written by Gillian McEachern and Chris Henschel, August 2001



FSC certification requires long-term care of the forest that helps species like the lynx.

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MORE INFORMATION:

www.wildlandsleague.org/certify.html
www.fscanada.org

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Other fact sheet topics in this series

- Conservation of White Pine
- Intensive Forest Management
- Control of Public Forests
- Protecting Shoreline Forests
- Maintaining the Ecological Integrity of the Boreal Forest



WILDLANDS LEAGUE

a chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society

The Wildlands League was founded in 1968 to protect wilderness in Ontario and became a chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) in 1980. We are solutions oriented and we get results. We are respected for our science-based campaigns to establish new protected areas, our efforts to ensure that nature comes first in the management of protected areas, and success at addressing issues of resource management and community development.

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