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INTEGRATED LAND-
USE PLANNING IN
THE BOREAL FOREST

As a leader in sustainable forest management, Canada constantly seeks new approaches to maintaining the health and productivity of its boreal forest. An evolving concept increasingly being applied across the country is integrated land-use planning.



Integrated land-use planning seeks to balance the economic, social and cultural opportunities in a specific area of forest with the need to maintain and enhance the health of the area's forest. In this process, all interested parties, large and small, come together to make decisions about how the land and its resources should be used and managed, and to coordinate their activities in a sustainable fashion. It holds that maintaining the integrity of the ecosystem is the primary consideration.

This type of broad-based collaboration and forethought is especially critical in Canada's boreal ecosystem where about half of the land remains unallocated to industry interests or protected areas but is currently undergoing planning processes that, in the coming decades, will determine allocation status. Achieving agreement now will help to ensure that the land base in the boreal forest is sustainably managed for both current and future generations. Integrated

land-use planning may also prove valuable in some areas that have already been allocated, as these development rights may have to be reconciled with important emerging demands such as expanding cities, Aboriginal land claims and conservation.

Applying integrated land-use planning in Canada's boreal forest is a complex task. It must: take place within the country's unique forest ownership and tenure mosaic; address the needs of many users, large and small; weigh in the important non-economic values that Canadians associate with their forests; and, maintain and enhance the health of the forest.

Canada's Unique Ownership and Management Mosaic

About 93 percent of Canada's forest is owned by provincial or territorial governments or the federal government, and more is coming under Aboriginal jurisdiction as land issues

THE IMPORTANCE OF PLANNING

Sustainable forestry requires good planning. Good planning starts with a strategy. It begins with an integrated land-use plan. This plan serves as the backdrop for the allocation and wise use of the resources in a particular area of forest, and for the conservation of the area's ecological integrity.

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, facilitating international trade in forest products, coordinating national healthy forests initiatives, increasing Aboriginal participation in forest management and

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harvesting, and meeting national and international reporting obligations.

Forest companies share in the responsibility for forest management. Companies with long-term licences to forest land pay cutting fees to the appropriate provincial/territorial government, and produce plans to carry out sustainable management in return for harvesting timber. These management plans must be submitted for approval before harvesting may take place. The plans, updated regularly, detail how forest values will be conserved, and identify on a map the areas to be harvested.

These ownership and management patterns have a profound impact on land-use planning in the boreal forest. Integrated land-use planning may provide a way to address the issues that arise from this ownership and management mosaic.

Multiple Users, Benefits and Voices

Also central to the planning process are the many economic activities that take place in the boreal forest. This vast expanse

PROVINCIAL LAND USE FRAMEWORKS

As leading players in the management of Canada's forest resources, most provincial governments have introduced land-use frameworks to address the sometimes competing interest of diverse stakeholders. For instance, Alberta's *Land-use Framework*, enshrined in the *Alberta Land Stewardship Act* proclaimed in 2009, is a comprehensive strategy to better manage public and private lands and natural resources such as forests to achieve Alberta's long-term economic, environmental and social goals.



of woodland — covering about half the country's landmass — supports some of Canada's most important industries. While forestry is the main industry in many boreal areas, it often vies with other economic activities for use of the same tract of land. The other activities include large-scale industries such as hydroelectric development, mining, and oil and gas extraction, and smaller operations such as hunting, trapping, fishing, tourism, and non-timber forest products.

At the same time, millions of Canadians look to their boreal forest for other benefits — aesthetic, environmental, cultural, historical, recreational and spiritual — that weave into the national fabric. Among the voices speaking for these values are government agencies, communities, Aboriginal peoples, environmental groups, private woodlot owners, academics, park supporters, recreational groups and the general public.

Achieving the Vision, Meeting the Challenge

The vision that Canadians have for their boreal forest is clear — they want the forest's long-term health to be main-

INTEGRATED LAND MANAGEMENT AND THE WOODLAND CARIBOU

Considering all values in landscape planning and management is especially important in areas that shelter species at risk, such as the woodland caribou. In west-central Alberta, the Foothills Research Institute's Woodland Caribou Program has brought together local forest operators, oil and gas companies, governments and First Nations to develop a coordinated plan to conserve the habitat of the area's caribou herds. Research results are used in forest management planning and timber harvest projections.

tained 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.

Achieving the cooperation and consensus of multiple stakeholders with often conflicting needs is a challenging task. The task takes on added complexity when the well-being of the forest is the primary consideration. Integrated land-use planning is an approach that is proving successful in meeting this challenge and in achieving the vision that Canadians embrace for their forests.