Questions and Answers
Sustainable Forest Management

Q1. Is Canada managing its forests to ensure their sustainability?

A1. Yes. Canada is widely regarded as one of the most advanced and progressive nations for sustainably managing its forests.

The Government of Canada works with the provinces, territories and stakeholders to ensure the sustainability of Canada's forests and to support the many forest-dependent communities across our nation.

The comprehensive legislative and regulatory framework that governs forest management in each province and territory provides assurances that our forests are managed sustainably. These laws, regulations and policies govern various aspects including planning land use, forest management, public consultations, Aboriginal participation, protected areas, tenure and allocation of wood for harvesting, and regeneration of forest land. Of note, all forests harvested on public lands must be regenerated.

In addition, third-party sustainable forest management certification demonstrates the integrity of forest management practices. Canada has 161 million hectares of forest land – twice the size of France and Germany combined – independently certified as being sustainably managed by one or more of three globally recognized certification systems, the Canadian Standards Association, the Forest Stewardship Council and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative. This is more than any other country in the world.

Q2. What is Canada doing to protect its forests?

A2. Canadians can be proud of our network of protected areas. About 24 million hectares of forest area are protected in Canada – which is the size of the entire United Kingdom. About two-thirds of Canada's protected forests lie within national and provincial parks. The rest lies in other types of protected areas, such as wildlife reserves. Many millions of additional hectares lie in remote, inaccessible areas and, therefore, are also largely unaffected by human activity.

Q3. What is the Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement?

A3. The Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement (CBFA) is the world's largest conservation agreement and sets a global precedent for boreal conservation and cooperation. CBFA partners work together to negotiate a balance between forest sector prosperity and conservation directly involving 73 million hectares of boreal forest, or one-third of Canada's managed forest land. Signatories to the CBFA include the Forest Products Association of Canada (FPAC), its 18 member companies, Kruger Inc., and seven Canadian environmental non-government organizations.

The CBFA created a process whereby forest companies and leading environmental NGOs – that have historically found themselves in conflict – adopted a framework of collaboration. CBFA partners then make broadly supported policy recommendations to provincial governments as the authorities ultimately responsible for forest management in Canada.

Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) financially supports the implementation of the science program of the CBFA. This funding helps the CBFA's science program carry out leading-edge, independent research that enables signatories to meet their commitment of making informed decisions on conservation issues.

Q4. How does NRCan promote sustainable forest management?

A4. NRCan is actively engaged in promoting sustainable forest management and conducts forest science to improve our understanding of forest ecosystems and the various disturbances that shape them. This year, the department will invest more than $60 million in forest science research.

Additionally, NRCan reports annually to Parliament on Canada's forests through *The State of Canada's Forests* report. For 25 years, this legislated report has demonstrated that the Government of Canada knows how valuable forests are to Canadians by offering a national snapshot of the economic, social and environmental status of forests and forestry in Canada.

Canada is a recognized global leader in promoting sustainable forest practices. Canada led the way in developing the International Model Forest Network (IMFN) – a global network of 60 model forests in 30 countries on five continents. This initiative has increased knowledge of natural resource management and demonstrated the on-the-ground application of the principles of sustainable development. The IMFN leads network-wide initiatives focused on community sustainability, climate change and the development of ecological goods and services, all initiatives that will support resource-based communities over the long term.

Q5. Is deforestation occurring in Canada and to what extent?

A5. The United Nations reported that deforestation rates are virtually zero and have been for over two decades. Almost all forest cover losses or forest cover change in Canada are both natural and temporary. This is not the same as deforestation.

It is important to distinguish between deforestation — the permanent conversion of forest to other land uses — and forest cover change. During the past two decades, deforestation has annually affected 0.02% of Canada's forest land due to agriculture and urbanization. The temporary disturbances from forest fires and harvesting are sometimes mistakenly reported as deforestation. In fact, those lands regenerate over time and, therefore, are not considered "deforested" according to United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization definition.

In Canada, provincial laws and policies dictate that all harvested areas on public lands must be regenerated successfully to provincial and territorial legislation, policies and regulations within a specified period.

Q6. How does Canada monitor and assess the impact of forest cover change?

A6. Canadian government scientists are actively engaged in ongoing assessments of Canada's forests. Their research considers the long-term sustainability of forest ecosystems, and our practices continue to improve as our knowledge and technical capabilities evolve.

To fully understand what is happening in the vast forests that stretch across our nation, Canadian government scientists combine data from a variety of sources: aerial images, land-use records and field inspections. Satellite images are a cost-effective means of monitoring losses in forest cover, but used alone they do not always show why changes are taking place, what impact they will have, or whether the changes are permanent. Nor do they capture regeneration in its early stages.

Any landscape fragmentation that may occur is increasingly mitigated through ecosystem-based land management strategies and innovative best practices in our natural resource sectors. For example, Canada has identified the critical boreal habitat necessary to support certain large-ranging animals such as the boreal population of woodland caribou, known as boreal caribou, and it is implementing the *Species at Risk Act* (the Act) through,for example, recovery strategies to help guide the planning and implementation of recovery actions where necessary.

NRCan also conducts its own research in the boreal, and recently published a series of research papers that reviewed more than 4,000 peer-reviewed, scientific papers on Canada's boreal forests and ecosystems. The synthesis found that, although there are localized impacts from resource development, the overall sustainability of Canada's boreal ecosystems remains intact.

Q7. How does NRCan science help understand the impact of climate change?

A7. NRCan science improves the understanding of climate change impacts on forests, which contributes to forest management strategies that help mitigate the impact. NRCan uses on-the-ground measurements and remote sensing information to track the effect of climate change on a range of forest properties and on disturbance regimes (fire and pest outbreaks). NRCan scientists also analyze historical data to better understand the effects of past climate change on forests and to develop forest change models for future climate change scenarios.

NRCan scientists develop information and knowledge products that can be readily incorporated into a suite of sustainable forest management decisions. For example, NRCan scientists have created a new map that shows changes in plant hardiness zones caused by a changing climate. They have developed interactive tools to map where the climate conditions prevailing within the distribution of a given species could be found in a given timeframe under a selected climate change scenario. This information increases awareness of climate change impacts and informs tree species selection for restoration and regeneration strategies adapted to climate change.

Sustainable forest practices such as intensive silviculture, fertilization, site protection and improved regeneration can increase the amount of carbon stored in a forest stand and contribute to Canada's efforts to mitigate climate change.

Q8. Who is responsible for the conservation of boreal caribou?

A8. The Government of Canada is responsible for protection of species at risk through the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA). Wildlife listed under the Act include those determined to be threatened, endangered or extirpated – which means that they are at risk of local extinction although populations may exist elsewhere. Depending on the level of risk, the government enacts a series of measures that include a recovery strategy and an action plan.

The plans use the best available information to determine "critical habitat," which is defined as the habitat necessary for the survival or recovery of a listed wildlife species. Once critical habitat has been identified for a given species in a final recovery strategy or action plan, SARA requires that it be protected. To date, critical habitat has been identified for 150 listed species.

Importantly, all recovery documents are prepared in collaboration with federal, provincial and territorial ministers, and Aboriginal organizations, landowners, and others who may be impacted by the recovery strategy. When critical habitat is identified on non-federal lands, the federal government turns to provinces to manage and protect this habitat.

Q9. Are socio-economic factors considered during the development of recovery strategies?

A9. Recovery strategies are technical documents that describe what a species needs biologically to survive and recover. Under SARA , socio-economic interests are considered at different stages, for example, when a decision to list a species under the Act is made and when an order is made by the Governor-in-Council to protect critical habitat. The net effect is that the federal government will always take socio-economic considerations into account when making regulations for non-federal lands.

Q10. How does the federal government plan to achieve its goals for the recovery strategy for the boreal woodland caribou population?

A10. The government takes our responsibilities under SARA seriously, and we are committed to the conservation of Canada's boreal caribou. A recovery strategy was published in October 2012 outlining what needs to be done to arrest or reverse the decline of boreal woodland caribou. The recovery goal of the strategy is to achieve self-sustaining local populations in all boreal caribou ranges across Canada to the extent possible.

Responsibility for the management of boreal caribou rests with the provincial and territorial governments except on federal lands (where the federal government is responsible). This recovery strategy was developed in collaboration with our provincial and territorial counterparts.

The key next step in the implementation of the recovery strategy is for provinces/territories to develop range plans for boreal caribou that will set out how critical habitat will be managed and protected. Provinces/territories may also describe other actions needed to conserve and recovery boreal caribou.

Q11. What is critical habitat for boreal woodland caribou?

A11. The recovery strategy identifies critical habitat for all boreal caribou ranges across Canada, with the exception of northern Saskatchewan's Boreal Shield range where there is a lack of information about the boreal caribou local population. Among other things, critical habitat is identified as a minimum threshold of 65% undisturbed habitat in each range, which provides a 60% probability of persistence of boreal caribou within a range.

Q12. What are boreal caribou range plans?

A12. The recovery strategy calls for development of range plans by the responsible provincial and territorial jurisdictions within three to five years (i.e. by October 2017).

The majority of boreal caribou critical habitat is located on non-federal lands. Consequently, for each of the ranges, the federal recovery strategy calls for the provinces/territories to develop a range plan by October 2017. Range plans will describe how critical habitat in a given range will be protected and explain the province's/territory's approach to managing a range in order to maintain or attain an ongoing minimum of 65% undisturbed habitat over time. For boreal caribou, socio-economics will be taken into account within action planning and range planning processes led by provinces and territories.

Q13. How will the federal government determine whether boreal caribou critical habitat is protected on non-federal lands?

A13. Environment Canada will look first to the provincial/territorial jurisdictions to put critical habitat protection in place on non-federal lands. The range plans are a key tool to describe how critical habitat in a given range will be protected by the jurisdictions. In the absence of a range plan, the Minister of the Environment will use the best available information and consult with the jurisdiction to determine whether critical habitat is protected on non-federal lands.

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