

Canadian Boreal Forest Conservation Framework



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Vision

The Boreal Forest Conservation Framework (the Framework) is a shared vision to sustain the ecological and cultural integrity of the Canadian Boreal Forest in perpetuity.

Our vision is that Canada's Boreal Forest will become the world's best conserved forest ecosystem, while supporting Northern communities by developing leading sustainable management practices. Together, Canadians will recognize and promote the important value of healthy Boreal ecosystems and communities.

The Boreal Leadership Council

The Boreal Leadership Council (BLC) is comprised of leading conservation groups, Aboriginal communities, resource-based companies and financial institutions, all of which have an interest and a stake in the future of Canada's Boreal Forest. Members of the Council are committed to implementing the Framework within their own activities and at the national level.

The Canadian Boreal Initiative houses the BLC secretariat and works with members to turn the Framework principles into action, expand endorsement of the Framework in key sectors, and influence important policy outcomes.

Many other companies and organizations have also endorsed the principles of the Framework. A full list is available at www.borealcanada.ca/framework-endorsers-e.php.



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Context

The Canadian Boreal Forest encompasses approximately 574 million hectares (1.4 billion acres) and contains one quarter of the world's remaining original forests. One of the largest intact forest ecosystems left on Earth, the Boreal is home to a rich array of wildlife including migratory songbirds, waterfowl, bears, wolves and the world's largest caribou herds. Canada's Boreal is a major part of the Boreal region that encircles the northern part of the globe and stores more freshwater in its wetlands and lakes and more carbon in its trees, soil and peat than anywhere else on the planet. The Boreal's natural wealth sustains many of Canada's Aboriginal communities who have lived in harmony with the Boreal for thousands of years. It also supports thousands of jobs and contributes billions of dollars to the Canadian economy. Protecting the long-term integrity of the Boreal Forest is key to the sustainability and well-being of its communities and to the economic and ecological goods and services it provides.¹

¹ Referred to in the Framework variously as the Boreal and the Boreal Forest, the Canadian Boreal ecosystem includes seven ecozones defined under the National Ecological Framework for Canada: the Boreal Plains, Boreal Shield, Boreal Cordillera, Taiga Plains, Taiga Shield, Taiga Cordillera and Hudson Plains. The southern part of the Boreal Shield ecozone (Algonquin Lake Nipissing ecoregion) is not included in the Boreal ecosystem due to the predominantly non-Boreal tree species in that area.

The Boreal Forest Conservation Framework was developed jointly with Boreal Leadership Council members and involved consultation with a range of scientists, conservationists and Aboriginal leaders. It is based on the best available science and traditional knowledge and is intended to inform a dialogue with governments and other stakeholders about how to secure the long-term future of Canada's Boreal Forest.



Goal

The Framework's goal is to conserve the cultural, sustainable economic and natural values of the entire Canadian Boreal Forest by employing the principles of conservation biology to:

- protect at least 50% of the Boreal in a network of large interconnected protected areas, and
- support sustainable communities, world-leading ecosystem-based resource management and state-of-the-art stewardship practices across the remaining landscape.

The goal reflects a national vision, not a formula for adoption in every jurisdiction. In promoting a conservation approach for the entire Boreal, the Framework recognizes that conservation challenges and opportunities will vary. What may be achievable in a particular region at a given point in time will be influenced by a variety of factors including existing industrial allocations, land ownership patterns, and the evolving status of Aboriginal and Treaty rights and land use planning exercises.



Principles

The Framework aims to:

- Maintain ecological processes which account for the overall health of the Boreal Forest across the full spectrum of human uses;
- Maintain intact areas to minimize fragmentation wherever possible;
- Ensure sustainable economic benefits to Northern communities and the viability of commercial interests;
- Respect the lands, rights and ways of life of Aboriginal people;
- Acknowledge and respect the leadership role of Aboriginal people in achieving conservation goals on their traditional lands;
- Ensure the inclusion of Aboriginal people, through respect for their governance of the land and their traditional knowledge, in all Boreal conservation efforts;
- Recognize and value the diversity of local cultures and local communities;
- Seek innovative and lasting solutions based on partnerships among all affected parties;
- Achieve additional environmental and social benefits by making the least impacts to raw material supply, cost and workforce levels;
- Use scientific knowledge, traditional knowledge and local perspectives to achieve the conservation of natural and cultural values; and
- Improve and adapt our approaches and practices to meet changing natural conditions and evolving knowledge over time.

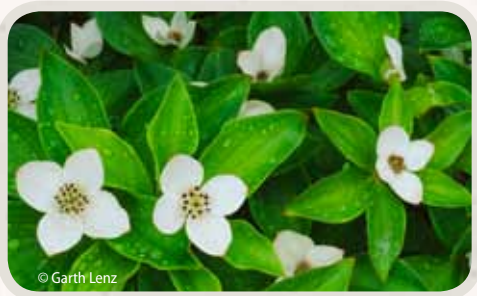


The Framework recognizes that a number of existing activities – such as the identification of High Conservation Value Forests (HCVF), integrated landscape management practices, Forest Stewardship Council certification, use of alternative resources, and ongoing research to support best practices – can make a significant contribution to achieving the goals and vision outlined above.

Commitments

Commitments of the Framework are to:

- Engage in joint and broadly agreed-upon actions to support the Framework;
- Support effective land use planning exercises, using science and traditional ecological knowledge and participating with governments, Aboriginal people and other stakeholders at the local and regional level;



- Support the realization of conservation goals as an integral part of consensus-based decision-making prior to land use decisions or industrial development;
- Collaborate to promote knowledge about the Boreal among stakeholders, Aboriginal people and all Canadians through advancing scientific research and traditional ecological knowledge with consent and in accordance with traditional knowledge protocols;
- Ensure best management practices and performance standards wherever economic activity is undertaken in the Boreal;

- Support the development of innovative incentives for the application of effective best management practices in the Boreal;
- Maintain the right and ability of Aboriginal people to continue their traditional ways of life, including fishing, hunting and gathering, while also ensuring opportunities for their participation in the sustainable economic development of the Boreal;
- Lead initiatives to:
 - Conserve biological diversity at the genetic, species and ecosystem levels;
 - Maintain the full range of ecological processes, including intact watersheds and aquatic ecosystems and disturbances such as fire;
 - Ensure ecological resiliency so Boreal species can adapt to natural disturbances and climate change;
 - Maintain abundant and natural distributions of wildlife populations within large intact Boreal landscapes and waterscapes;
 - Maintain and enhance the significant carbon sequestration and storage value of Boreal land and waterscapes;
- Engage in accelerated and collaborative conservation planning and design, particularly in intact areas in advance of development;

- Agree to deferrals in both allocated and unallocated lands based on key ecological values² in order to allow land use planning processes to be completed in advance of industrial development;
- Support the use of policy tools such as interim land deferrals and conservation offsets to facilitate voluntary stewardship by industry;
- Seek creative solutions to mitigate any negative impacts on communities, business and labour from the establishment of protected areas;
- Promote jointly in the marketplace the environmental benefits of products originating from well-managed landscapes; and



- Initiate a voluntary declaration by each Framework supporter on specific actions to be taken, within their scope of responsibility, to implement the Framework.

² Key ecological values include intactness, old growth/late seral stage forest, connectivity, water and wetlands values, rare ecosystem types, and core habitat of focal species.

Protected areas

In order to safeguard sufficiently intact natural areas that can ensure ecological goods and services and full ecosystem function, governments in Canada (federal, provincial, territorial and Aboriginal), supported by industry, conservation organizations, private landowners and the public, should cooperate to establish an interconnected network of large protected areas. These include parks, wildlife areas, protected areas in both the allocated and unallocated Boreal, and other legislative mechanisms representing all natural regions, native species and ecological processes over at least 50% of the entire Boreal.

- The purpose of these protected areas should be to provide sufficiently intact habitat and ecological functions to ensure, in perpetuity, continued ecosystem integrity and viable and abundant fish and wildlife populations.
- Criteria for designing protected areas include: cultural significance, ecological representation, large interconnected core habitats for key species, water and wetlands values, and ensuring high quality wilderness experiences.
- Protected areas should be identified through collaborative conservation area and network design, incorporating existing protected areas and candidates for protected status.
- New protected areas should exclude industrial development such as logging, mining, hydro, new roads, and oil and gas while accommodating activities such as traditional hunting, fishing and gathering.
- Relevant political jurisdictions and Aboriginal people should establish protected areas through appropriate land use planning processes.
- Framework supporters will work together with appropriate decision-making bodies to support timely protected areas establishment.



Sustainable development areas



To ensure that the Canadian Boreal Forest continues to produce economic benefits for communities and the nation in perpetuity, sustainable development areas are anticipated on land outside of protected areas (up to 50% of the Boreal) under a set of world-class resource management standards and practices. New sustainable development areas should only be established as an output of the process of conservation planning.



- The goal of the sustainable development areas is to foster healthy regional economies and communities that will receive tangible and lasting benefits from activities in their areas. This will be achieved through responsible, sustainable, commercial, recreational and traditional uses of the renewable natural resources of the Boreal, including its wood, water, fish, plants and wildlife.
- Sustainable development areas encompass a balanced spectrum of industrial activities which should be managed to meet or exceed internationally-recognized standards, such as those of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) for forests, and comparable standards that may emerge in the future for other industrial activities.
- Non-renewable resource extraction should be carried out in a manner consistent with the maintenance of ecological integrity of the Boreal and the responsible and sustainable use of renewable natural resources. This should include project planning, reclamation standards and securities that are sufficient to help protect and restore native biodiversity.
- These areas should reflect state-of-the-art best management practices and performance standards.
- Development area designations should recognize and respect the rights and needs of existing traditional, commercial and recreational uses.
- Resource management in sustainable development areas should recognize and respect the legal and customary rights of Aboriginal peoples over their lands, territories and resources.
- Aboriginal peoples shall control resource management on their lands and territories unless they delegate control with free and informed consent to other agencies.
- Joint and collaborative work should be based on shared information, transparency and a common technical base.



The Boreal's role in stabilizing world climate

Changes in land use and deforestation release significant amounts of stored carbon into the atmosphere. The Boreal Forest is the world's largest terrestrial storehouse of carbon, storing hundreds of billions of tons of carbon in its forests, wetlands and peat lands. Conserving intact ecosystems will help species, systems and local communities adapt to changing climate conditions.



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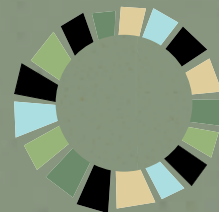
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The Canadian Boreal Initiative (CBI) works with First Nations, governments, conservation organizations, industry leaders and others to link science, policy and conservation solutions across Canada's Boreal Forest.



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