



# BOREAL FOREST CONSERVATION FRAMEWORK

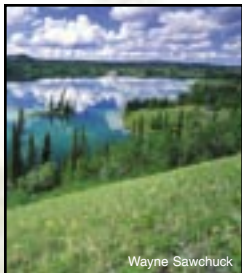
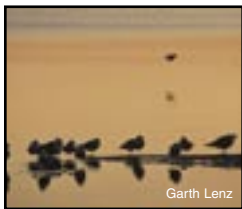


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## BOREAL LEADERSHIP COUNCIL



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## VISION

The Boreal Forest Conservation Framework is based on a shared vision to sustain the ecological and cultural integrity of the Canadian boreal forest region, in perpetuity.

In implementing this vision, Canada's boreal region will become the world's best conserved forest ecosystem, while supporting Northern communities by developing world-leading sustainable resource management practices. Together, the many peoples of this region will demonstrate the importance and potential for healthy Northern ecosystems and communities.

## CONTEXT

Canada's boreal region contains one-quarter of the world's remaining original forests. One of the largest intact forest ecosystems left on Earth, Canada's 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, storing more freshwater in 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 to the Canadian economy. Protecting the integrity of the boreal region over the long term is key to the sustainability and well-being of these communities and to the vital economic and ecological goods and services the boreal provides.

The Boreal Forest Conservation Framework reflects the collective wisdom of the Boreal Leadership Council and is based on the best available information. It is intended to catalyze and inform a dialogue with governments and other boreal stakeholders about how to secure the long-term future of Canada's boreal region.

<sup>1</sup> Referred to in the Framework variously as the boreal, the boreal forest, and the boreal region, the Canadian Boreal ecosystem is defined here to include 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; that together encompass approximately 580 million hectares (1.4 billion acres).

<sup>2</sup> Key values in designing protected areas will include: intactness, old growth/late seral stage forest, connectivity, water and wetlands values, rare ecosystem types, and focal species' core habitat.

## GOAL

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

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

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.

As such, the Framework represents a national vision and goal for the region as a whole, rather than a formula to be applied on a unit-by-unit basis in a particular part of the boreal.

## PRINCIPLES

Principles of the Framework are 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 peoples and First Nations;
- Acknowledge and respect the leadership role of Aboriginal people and First Nations in achieving conservation goals on their traditional lands;
- Ensure the inclusion of Aboriginal people and First Nations, through respect for their governance of the land and their traditional knowledge, in all conservation efforts in the boreal forest;
- Recognize and value the diversity of local cultures and local communities;
- Seek innovative and lasting solutions based on partnerships among all affected parties;
- Achieve optimal additional environmental and social benefit from the least raw material supply, cost, and workforce adjustment impact;
- Utilize scientific knowledge, traditional knowledge, and local perspectives to achieve the conservation of natural and cultural values; and
- Continuously improve and adapt our approaches and practices based on 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 such as alternative fibres in the wood products industries, and ongoing research to support best practices – can make a significant contribution to achieving the goals and vision outlined above.

## COMMITMENTS

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Commitments of the Framework are to:

- Engage in joint actions in support of the Framework which a broad spectrum of participants can agree to and take action upon;
- Support effective land use planning exercises, utilizing science and traditional ecological knowledge, with the participation of governments, First Nations, 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 region among stakeholders, Aboriginal people, First Nations and all Canadians through the advancement of 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 region;
- Support the development of innovative incentives for the application of effective best management practices in the boreal region;
- Maintain the right and ability of Aboriginal people and First Nations to maintain their traditional ways of life, including fishing, hunting and gathering, while ensuring opportunities for their participation in the sustainable economic development of the boreal region;
- 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 Canadian 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 values (which include intactness, old growth/late seral stage forest, connectivity, water and wetlands values, rare ecosystem types, and core habitat of focal species) 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 to facilitate voluntary stewardship by industry;
- Seek creative solutions to mitigate any negative impacts of protected areas establishment on business, labour and communities;
- Jointly promote in the marketplace the environmental benefits of products originating from well-managed landscapes; and
- Initiate a voluntary declaration by each signatory of specific actions to be taken, within their scope of responsibility, to implement the Framework.

## PROTECTED AREAS

In order to safeguard sufficient intact natural areas to ensure ecological services and full ecosystem function, federal, provincial, territorial and Aboriginal governments in Canada, supported by industry, conservation organizations, private landowners and the public will cooperate to establish an interconnected network of large protected areas, including parks, National Wildlife Areas and other legislative mechanisms representing all natural regions and key ecological values over at least 50% of the entire boreal region.

- The primary purpose of these protection areas will be to provide sufficient intact habitat and ecological functions to ensure, in perpetuity, continued ecosystem integrity and viable and abundant fish and wildlife populations.<sup>2</sup>
- Protected areas will include new large wilderness areas, networks that expand the conservation influence of existing protected areas, and protected areas in both unallocated and allocated boreal regions.
- Protected areas will be identified through collaborative conservation area and network design, incorporating existing protected areas and candidates for protected status.
- Criteria for protected areas include: ecological representation, large interconnected cores; core habitat for key species; accommodating traditional uses; ensuring high quality wilderness experiences, and ensuring sustainable harvest opportunities of key species.
- New protected areas will exclude industrial development such as logging, mining, hydro, oil and gas, and new roads, but shall include human activities such as traditional hunting, fishing, and gathering.
- Relevant political jurisdictions, Aboriginal people and First Nations will establish individual protected areas through appropriate land use planning processes.
- Boreal Forest Conservation Framework supporters will work together with appropriate decision-making bodies to ensure that designation of protected areas occurs in a timely manner.



## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AREAS

In order to ensure that the boreal forest continues, in perpetuity, to produce economic benefits for communities and the nation, sustainable development areas are anticipated on land outside of protected areas (up to 50% of the boreal region) under a set of world-class resource management standards and guidelines. These Sustainable Development Areas would be established as an output of the process of conservation planning.

- Ecologically sustainable development areas encompass a balanced spectrum of areas in which industrial activities will be managed to meet or exceed high internationally-recognized standards, such as those of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) for forests, and comparable standards that may emerge in the future for mining, oil and gas extraction or other activities.
- A primary purpose of sustainable development areas will be responsible, sustainable, commercial recreational and traditional use of the renewable natural resources of the boreal, including its wood, water, fish, plants and wildlife.
- Non-renewable resource extraction, such as oil and gas and mineral development will occur where these activities are carried out in a manner consistent with the maintenance of the ecological integrity of the overall boreal landscape, and responsible and sustainable use of renewable natural resources.
- Responsible non-renewable resource extraction practices will maintain the ecological integrity of the overall boreal landscape and will include project planning, reclamation standards and adequate security deposits sufficient to help protect and restore native biodiversity.
- These areas will reflect state-of-the-art best management practices and performance standards.
- A primary goal of the sustainable development areas will be to foster healthy regional economies and communities that will receive tangible and lasting benefits from activities in their areas.
- Development area designations will recognize and respect the rights and needs of existing commercial, recreational, and traditional uses.
- Resource management in sustainable development areas will recognize and respect the legal and customary rights of Aboriginal peoples and First Nations over their lands, territories and resources.
- Aboriginal peoples and First Nations 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 will be based on shared information, transparency and a common technical base.

## THE BOREAL'S ROLE IN STABILIZING WORLD CLIMATE

In order to reduce the impacts of human induced climate change to the greatest extent possible, participating parties under this Framework will adopt measures to maintain and enhance the vast carbon sequestration and storage value of Canadian boreal landscapes. These measures will be consistent with the goals and principles of the Framework.



The Canadian Boreal Initiative (CBI) is an independent organization working with conservationists, Aboriginal peoples, industry and others to link science, policy and conservation activities in Canada's boreal region.

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