

State of the Forest Report, 2001



Minister of Natural Resources
of the Province of Ontario

**To her Honour
The Lieutenant-Governor
of the Province of Ontario**

May it please your Honour

The undersigned begs respectfully to present to your Honour the State of the Forest Report, 2001

John C. Snobelen
Minister

January, 2002



State of the Forest Report 2001

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Table of Contents

FOREWORD	i-3
SUMMARY	i-6
Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION	1-1
1.1 KEY MAPS AND TERMINOLOGY	1-3
Map of the forest regions and Ecoregions	1-5
Map of MNR Administrative Boundaries and the Planning Area	1-6
Map of Forest Management Units and the Area of the Undertaking	1-7
1.2 ONTARIO’S LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK	1-9
The Policy Framework	1-9
Environmental Bill of Rights	1-9
The Crown Forest Sustainability Act	1-10
Environmental Assessment Board Decision	1-10
The Forest Resource Assessment Policy	1-11
Ontario’s Living Legacy Land Use Strategy	1-11
Provincial Guidelines and Manuals	1-11
Chapter 2 THE EVOLUTION OF FOREST SUSTAINABILITY REPORTING AND EVALUATION	2-1
2.1 INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT	2-2
2.2 CANADIAN CONTEXT	2-3
2.3 ONTARIO CONTEXT	2-5
Ontario’s Approach to Criteria and Indicators of Sustainable Forest Management	2-6
State of the Forest Reporting	2-6
Methods for Evaluating Forest Sustainability	2-6
2.4 SUMMARY	2-9
Chapter 3 CRITERIA AND INDICATORS OF SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT: STATE OF THE FOREST REPORTING TO ADDRESS THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE CROWN FOREST SUSTAINABILITY ACT (1994) AND THE FOREST RESOURCE ASSESSMENT POLICY	3-1
A hierarchy of indicators, elements, and criterion	3-3
1. <i>Biological Diversity in Ontario’s Forests</i>	3-4
Element 1.1 Landscape Diversity	3-7
Element 1.2 Ecosystem Diversity	3-22
Element 1.3 Species Diversity	3-33
Element 1.4 Genetic Diversity	3-38
2. <i>Forest Ecosystem Condition and Productivity in Ontario</i>	3-40
Element 2.1 Incidences of Forest Disturbance	3-43
Element 2.2 Forest Ecosystem Resilience and Productivity	3-52
3. <i>Ontario’s Forest Soil and Water Resources</i>	3-66
Element 3.1 Forest Soil Resources	3-68
Element 3.2 Forest Water Resources	3-70
4. <i>Monitoring Ontario’s Forest Contributions to Global Ecological Cycles</i>	3-76
Element 4.1 Forest Sector Contributions to Global Carbon Enrichment	3-78
Element 4.2 Conversion of Forest Land to Other Uses	3-79

Chapter 3	<i>continued.</i>	
	5. <i>The Economic and Social Benefits from Ontario's Forests</i>	3-83
	Element 5.1 Resource Production Capability	3-84
	Element 5.2 Forest Sector Employment, Investment and Competitiveness	3-92
	Element 5.3 Forest Sector Contributions to the Economy	3-100
	Element 5.4 Recreation, Tourism and Other Social and Environmental Values	3-105
	6. <i>Ontario's Social Responsibilities for Sustainable Forest Development</i>	3-117
	Element 6.1 Aboriginal Rights and Participation	3-118
	Element 6.2 Sustainable Forest-Based Communities	3-124
	Element 6.3 Public Participation in Decision-Making	3-128
	7. <i>Ontario's Framework for Sustainable Forest Management</i>	3-135
	Element 7.1 Legal Framework	3-136
	Element 7.2 Institutional Framework	3-140
	Element 7.3 Economic Framework	3-151
	Element 7.4 Monitoring Framework	3-156
	Element 7.5 Research and Development Framework	3-161
Chapter 4	STATE OF THE FOREST REPORTING TO ADDRESS CONDITION 84 OF THE CLASS ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT BY THE MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES FOR TIMBER MANAGEMENT ON CROWN LANDS IN ONTARIO APPROVAL	4-1
	4.1 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT BACKGROUND REVIEW	4-3
	4.1.a An update of the "Forest Resources of Ontario, 1986"	4-6
	4.1.b A summary of the preceding five "Annual Reports on Timber Management"	4-7
	4.1.c Wood supply synopses and projections by management unit, Region and cover type, and a description of typical strategies used to address wood supply concerns	4-25
	4.1.d A discussion of wood supply as related to the purpose of the undertaking	4-44
	4.1.e An estimate of the change in forest growing stock during the five-year term	4-44
	4.1.f A description of progress on improvement of implementation manuals, advances in information collection and management, and scientific research and technical development	4-45
	4.1.g A description of relevant provincial-level problems and issues anticipated over the next five years, and a description of any programs or projects expected to be implemented or enhanced to address those problems and issues	4-63
	4.1.h The effectiveness of the timber management planning process	4-68
	4.1.i The approved and updated Timber Production Policy	4-73
	4.1.j Conclusions on the success of meeting non-timber management objectives	4-74
	4.1.k Forecast and actual spending on tending and regeneration	4-79
	4.1.l Summary of the major unresolved problems associated with visual resources	4-83
	4.1.m Area harvested and average and maximum size of clearcuts	4-84
Chapter 5	CONCLUSION	5-1
	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	6-2
	APPENDICES	6-3
	Appendix 1 The Forest Resources of Ontario 2001	
	Appendix 2 Report on Wood Supply in Ontario	
	ACRONYMS	6-5
	GLOSSARY OF TERMS	6-7
	GLOSSARY OF TERMS SOURCES	6-20

Foreword

David Balsillie Ph.D.

Associate Professor, Faculty of Forestry, University of Toronto

Sustainable Forest Management (SFM): What is it? How do you achieve it? How do you monitor it? These are questions that governments, industry, labour groups, non-government organizations, and academics are wrestling with, while at the same time attempting to implement the concepts associated with the sustainable forest management philosophy. Through the use of criteria (a condition or process by which to evaluate sustainable forest management) and indicators (a numerical measure or description of a criterion), efforts are being made to monitor the environmental, economic, and social impacts of implementing sustainable forest management. Then, through the processes of adaptive management, adjustments will be made to forest practices to ensure the long-term sustainability of the forest resource, its component parts, the forest industry, and forest-dependent communities. Correctly selected indicators can be used to quantify the effects of forest activities on the criterion they describe. Indicators must consider the type, intensity, duration, and extent of the activity, and be evaluated within an appropriate time and space. The indicator measurements must also be integrated at the local, regional, national, and international levels to ensure that all criteria are being met at various scales. Here, MNR is presenting a set of criteria and indicators to be used provincially to measure how successfully sustainable forest management is being implemented in Ontario.

Canada has been through a series of evolving forest management principles. During the early *unregulated era*, from the mid-1600s to the mid-1800s, there were no rules. Then from the mid-1800s to the early 1900s, the *revenue from timber era* saw lumber barons seeking fortunes from Canada's vast forests. From 1900 to about 1950, the *conservation era*, concerns increased about the ongoing supply of timber. However, by 1950, the *sustained yield era* emerged with a strong focus on having a guaranteed amount of wood available annually for harvesting. In 1987, the Brundtland report, *Our Common Future*, based

on the work of the United Nations Commission on the Environment and Development, ushered in the concept of *sustainable development* (defined as: *development that meets the needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*). This report triggered the beginning of the *sustainable forest management era* in the early 1990s.

At the 1992 United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Canada joined with many other countries to endorse the concept of sustainable development. Also in that year, the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers (CCFM) sponsored the development and release of a five-year *National Forest Strategy* for Canada. Ontario, along with the federal and other provincial governments, as well as a wide variety of other forestry-related organizations, signed the *National Forest Accord*, which accompanied the strategy. The accord committed the signatories to the implementation of the action items contained in the strategy's nine strategic directions. The strategy defined sustainable forest management as: *maintaining and enhancing the long-term health of our forest ecosystems, for the benefit of all living things both nationally and globally, while providing environmental, economic, social, and cultural opportunities for the benefit of present and future generations*. The strategy was renewed (for another five years) in 1998 with an increased number of signatories endorsing the new accord.

As a result of the above national and international commitments, Canada began to lead an endeavour to develop internationally acceptable criteria and indicators (C&I) of sustainable forest management. By 1995, 15 countries containing the world's non-European temperate and boreal forests signed the Santiago Declaration endorsing the use of seven criteria and 67 indicators. This is commonly referred to as the *Montreal Process*. A similar activity in Europe (the Helsinki or Pan-European Process) led to the development of C&I for the European temperate and boreal forests; other processes developed C&I for the

tropical forests. Currently there are eight major sets of international C&I being applied to the management of the world's forests. Within Canada, a CCFM-led process resulted in the development of Canadian C&I, consisting of six criteria and 83 indicators, commonly referred to as the CCFM set of C&I. The CCFM set is based on the C&I of the Montreal Process, but designed for the Canadian situation.

The government of Ontario introduced the Sustainable Forestry Initiative in 1991. This program comprised a number of elements, including developing an old growth strategy, researching alternative silviculture techniques, undertaking a forest audit entitled *A Report on the Status of Forest Regeneration*, which was conducted by an independent committee, seeking vegetation management alternatives, setting up four pilot community forests, examining forest values, conducting a forest resources assessment project, and developing a comprehensive forest policy framework. The comprehensive forest policy framework project, carried out by a four-person policy panel, produced the summary document, *Diversity: Forests, people, community*. This document laid out the goals for Ontario's forests, the principles for sustaining forests, community and resource sustainability, the principles for decision-making, and essential steps towards ecosystem management. This policy framework became the basis for the development of Ontario's *Crown Forest Sustainability Act* (CFSA), which was put into practice in April 1995. This Act firmly entrenched the concept of sustainable forest management within the legislative process of Ontario. With the implementation of the CFSA came new ways of managing on an ecosystem basis; conducting forest management planning; considering a wider range of forest values; managing forest fees, fines, and penalties; and assisting in the provision of a stable economic environment for the forest industry and forest-dependent communities.

There are requirements in both the CFSA and the *Decision of the Class Environmental Assessment for Timber Management on Crown Lands in Ontario* that the MNR report at regular intervals on the state of Ontario's forests. This report fulfills both of those requirements. Ontario, and the other provinces, are also required to report to the federal government to sup-

port the production of an annual *Canadian State of the Forest* report. Based on input from the provinces, Canada reports to other member countries of the Montreal Process on its progress in monitoring that set of indicators. Therefore, as well as determining whether Ontario's forests are being managed sustainably, gathering this information fulfills other legal and obligatory requirements.

The criteria and indicators developed for use in Ontario, and described in this report, are mainly the product of internal MNR research and consultation. In addition, two workshops were held to obtain the input of other representative organizations, such as the Canadian Forest Service, forest industry, non-government organizations, professional foresters, and academics. MNR developed a provincial set of criteria and indicators to meet the specific requirements of sustainable forest management in Ontario, based on international and national frameworks developed through the Montreal Process and the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers. Therefore, data collected using the Ontario criteria and indicator system will be useful in meeting the requirements described above.

Actual measurement of all of these indicators will require a considerable commitment. While data exists for many indicators, especially those related to timber management practices, there are many for which data have not yet been assembled, and for some indicators, assessment methods will have to be developed before measurements can begin. The success of this program will depend on the cooperation of all levels of government, industry, labour, non-government organizations, and academia. Collection and analysis of this complex and comprehensive data is an extraordinary task, but once the system is in place and the benchmarks are established, the results will determine how effectively Ontario is managing its forest resource compared to other jurisdictions at the provincial, national, and international levels.

Through this process, Ontario should be in a position to demonstrate to the rest of the world that efforts in the 1990s to introduce sustainable forest management have indeed been successful and that there will be forests to meet the future needs of successive generations.