


POINTS OF VIEW



In light of the current boreal forest debate,
what **VISION** do you have of Canada's boreal forest and why?

What would you suggest governments, industry, environmentalists
and other stakeholders do to help
RESOLVE THE DIVERGENT PERSPECTIVES of the boreal forest?

Blanketing 30 percent of the country, the boreal forest is as much a defining feature of Canada as the coastline, the prairies or the far north.

The boreal forest is home to almost one third of the planet's forests and more fresh water than anywhere else on Earth. Despite its harsh climate, it nurtures a huge variety of plant and animal life. It also produces oxygen and stores carbon dioxide, valuable functions in light of global warming.

The boreal forest is also tightly woven into Canada's social fabric; many communities, a significant number of them Aboriginal, call it their home. And the boreal is becoming increasingly attractive to the forest industry. As demand for wood mounts worldwide, so does the pressure on Canada's forest companies to move north. About half the country's boreal forest is now accessible to industry by highway and logging road.

Should forest companies continue to make inroads into the boreal? Should development be prohibited or restricted to preserve ecosystems and untouched areas? Is there room for both industrial development and environmental protection? And what of the communities that live and work in the boreal—how do they fit in?

These are the questions at the heart of today's debate about the boreal forest, the outcome of which will determine the future of this vast resource. To get a sense of the debate, where it's heading and how it might be resolved, we asked twelve Canadians to weigh in. Representing six forest interest groups—communities, environmentalists, industry, Aboriginal people, provincial government and youth—the interviewees expressed a range of views. Yet all agreed: careful planning and cooperation are essential, as a healthy, productive boreal forest tomorrow depends on sound decisions today.

HOW THEY STACK UP

They come from different groups and have different perspectives on the boreal forest. So it's not surprising that this year's interviewees voiced some contradictory opinions. What is surprising is the number of beliefs about the boreal forest that they share. These individuals see things differently, but their common ground bodes well for the future of Canada's boreal forest.

Where they agree

Balanced management

The boreal forest is valuable in many ways, to many groups. It must be managed so that all its benefits—ecological, economic, social, historical—continue to be enjoyed equally.

Cooperation in the forest

Everyone with a stake in the boreal forest must work together to manage it responsibly for future generations, so that no one group or interest predominates.

Aboriginal involvement

Canada's Aboriginal people, many of whom are boreal dwellers, need a direct say in forest decisions, and their rights, traditions and livelihood must be recognized and respected.

Land use planning

Strategic planning, involving all affected parties, is the only way to get balance, cooperation and community input.

Where they disagree

Who should take the lead?

Some believe that regions and communities should have the largest influence in planning for the boreal forest. Others think the provinces should be at the helm. As for national guidance, some feel it's valuable; others think it's unrealistic.

What is the role of protected areas?

Views differ here: protected forests should serve as working laboratories; they (or portions of them) should remain untouched and open to natural disturbances; they should not be left alone because they can become unhealthy, prone to infestation and fire.

What about environmental concerns?

Interviewees concur that environmental issues are key in managing the boreal forest. But some suggest that environmental groups wield too much influence, and that their role should become less rhetorical and more practical.

Is consensus a valid goal?

Some feel that consensus among boreal stakeholders is the only option. Others think debates and disagreements are inevitable, even desirable.

COMMUNITIES

Lawrence Martin is the Mayor of Cochrane, Ontario.

Ross Risvold, former Mayor of Hinton, Alberta, is Director of Special Projects for the West Yellowhead Community Futures Development Corporation.

Lawrence Martin and Ross Risvold are both municipal leaders from small boreal towns in which primary industry, including the forest industry, fuels a large chunk of the economy. Both believe Canada must do things differently if it is to manage its share of the boreal forest responsibly. But their ideas on what should change are quite at odds.

“My vision is full of fear,” says Martin. “There’s a lot of juggling of needs. There are a lot of beavers out there and not enough trees to go around. With our population growing, I see the point where there will be no forest resource left for people. [In Cochrane] we’re near the treeline and we can see the end of the trees from where we sit. They’re getting smaller and scarcer... There’s talk about protection, but not much action.”

Martin adds that Canada should protect the boreal forest by making conservation the focal point of land use planning. Planning must be stringent; it must limit what and how much industry can harvest and must encourage management of the forest for all its benefits, not just its commercial value.

Risvold agrees that balanced forest management is a must, that no single forest user or interest group should become the centrepiece of decision making. However, he believes that one sector—the environmental sector—is currently exerting a large and expanding influence in the boreal forest. “Many environmental groups are very rich in resources, and have sophisticated practices in communications and government relations. They also have increasing support from larger organizations in the United States. As a result, American influence on Canadian policy and legislation is growing and powerful.”

Risvold’s biggest concern is that environmental issues will become more and more influential, without equal emphasis on the other two pillars—social and economic—that he sees supporting Canada’s model for sus-

tainable forest development. At present, he says, social and economic areas receive less funding and less attention than the environmental sector. If this continues, Canadian communities may see negative effects like those faced by their U.S. counterparts. “Another lumber mill in Montana just shut down because they were cut off access to local timber,” Risvold notes. “Such shutdowns have huge negative consequences for forest communities that depend heavily on forest resources.” By balancing the three pillars, he says, Canada has an opportunity to create a model of boreal sustainability that can be followed the world over.



Risvold also worries that forest protection doesn't always mean forest health. "Protection can, for instance, lead to fuel buildup, which can cause devastating forest fires and subsequent effects on several things, such as greenhouse gas emissions, erosion, human life and loss of property, and loss of habitat which supports species such as woodland caribou."

Both municipal leaders see research and development as critical for the boreal forest, but here again they part ways. Martin, concerned that forest resources are dwindling and may not be available for future generations, believes R and D should focus on developing alternatives to wood fibre in certain products. Risvold, on the other hand, feels that research should concentrate on enhancing the forest resource. For one thing, forest researchers should develop decision support systems in the areas of social and economic sustainability, he says. For another, initiatives like the Model Forest Program, which are community-based and community-driven, should expand.

For both Martin and Risvold, boreal planning must involve stakeholders at all levels. Both say governments, provincial and federal, have a role to play in resolving different perspectives and bringing balance to planning. But they disagree about the influence forest communities should wield. For Risvold, local input is critical. "Forest communities, not people in removed urban regions, need increased influence into the policy, legislation and programs that directly affect them." Martin, while acknowledging the value of local input, cautions that communities will always feel pressured to keep jobs. For him, tighter provincial regulations are the only way to address the depletion he is witnessing in northern Ontario.

Cochrane and Hinton are very different locales. Cochrane, in northeastern Ontario, sits in a region where the forest industry is active. Hinton, on the other hand, borders Jasper National Park, an area prized for its natural beauty. The values and activities in each region no doubt account, at least in part, for the contrasting views of these two community leaders.

ENVIRONMENTALISTS

Tim Gray is Director of Boreal Forest Programs with the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) in Toronto.

Gary Stewart, based in Edmonton, is Manager of Boreal Conservation Programs for Ducks Unlimited Canada.

Tim Gray thinks Canada has a chance to set precedent in managing the boreal forest. But Gray envisions a different balance between development and conservation than the existing one.

Canada still relies on an outdated model of forest management, says Gray, one that considers development first and conservation as an afterthought. His vision for the boreal would change all that. "We can build on our experience with the southern boreal forest, where human development predominates and there are nodes of nature and corridors for wildlife. What I'd like to see in the northern boreal is the opposite: the forest staying predominantly wild, with nodes of human development and corridors for human transportation." To that end, he says, in looking north of the existing industrial line, we must make conservation decisions first, then decide where and when development can take place.

Similarly, Gary Stewart thinks Canada should embrace a “one hundred percent conservation solution” in the boreal forest. But conservation, in his mind, means a mixture of forest protection and leading-edge sustainable development. “I am a firm believer that [the two] can go hand in hand, ensuring that the economic, ecological and social values of the boreal forest are maximized for all.”

Like Gray, Stewart underscores the importance of moving conservation planning up the agenda. “We’ve seen in the south what can happen when you have to restore wetlands and watersheds after decades of unrestrained development. Restoration...is a very expensive and difficult proposition. In the boreal we have been presented with an incredible opportunity to do it differently, to do the conservation planning in concert with or before development occurs.”

In the working forest, he says, certain companies are already leading the way. Their involvement in forest certification, their investments in science and their commitment to ongoing improvement are setting an example for other industries to follow in developing best practices for sustainable development.



Ducks Unlimited and CPAWS are both members of Canada’s Boreal Leadership Council, a group founded in December 2003 to work towards a national vision for managing the boreal forest. Besides environmental organizations, the Council involves representatives from Aboriginal groups and the forest industry. A core concept for the Council is that forest plans be agreed to by all involved in and affected by the boreal. So it’s not surprising that Gray and Stewart stress collaboration as the key to dealing with divergent perspectives on the boreal forest.

For Stewart, information sharing is critical, as is cooperation in areas like research and funding. “With something as huge as the boreal forest, no one jurisdic-

tion or agency can look at everything. The approach has to be collaborative, and it has to be informed by a mixture of science, traditional knowledge and economic values.”

For Gray, forest certification offers promise for resolving different viewpoints. “Certification is one of the most effective forums for bringing together communities, environmental groups, businesses, Aboriginal people and others. It’s more effective than many government-led attempts I’ve participated in.” Certification, he adds, is one of the best options for making forest practices more sustainable. “The provincial governments have the means to influence market access through regulation and policy. But the major driver has to be the marketplace.”

INDUSTRY

Ken Higginbotham is Vice-President of Forestry, Environment and External Relations with Canfor (Canadian Forest Products Ltd.) in Vancouver.

Jim Lopez works for Tembec Inc. in Témiscaming, Quebec. He is the Executive Vice-President and President of the Forest Products Group.

Tembec sits on the Boreal Leadership Council with CPAWS and Ducks Unlimited, which may explain why Jim Lopez shares some of his environmentalist counterparts' vision. Above all, he says, balance is important in the boreal forest. "To get that balance, it's important that protected forest areas be identified first, before industry makes any investments."

Lopez offers two current examples of the kind of planning process he envisions for tomorrow's boreal. One example involves millions of hectares of sparsely inhabited boreal forest on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, of interest to forest companies and hydro-electricity developers. The Province of Manitoba has begun a planning exercise (which Tembec is involved in) to make sure that development, if it proceeds, is sound, balanced and mindful of different forest needs. The second example is in northern Ontario, where Tembec is discussing future development of the forest with Aboriginal groups that may want to get involved.

There are pros and cons to these inclusive planning processes, says Lopez. "On the positive side, this kind of planning will lead to balance. On the negative side, because of the different jurisdictions involved, the process is very bureaucratic and takes a long time. There's a lot of information to gather, and a lot of competing needs." As well, with local and Aboriginal communities getting more deeply involved in planning, information sharing will be more important than ever. "Land use planning is very technical; the concepts are difficult for everyone but the experts to understand. We need to educate key people in the communities so that they can explain the planning process to residents and develop processes to get valid feedback from residents on their needs and priorities."

The ideal of a boreal forest that balances industrial, social and ecological needs is shared by Ken Higginbotham. But he suggests we open up our view of what constitutes forest protection in that balance. "There are reasons to protect some forest," he says. "But we can also carry out forest activities to mirror successional disturbances in the boreal." As well, he advocates setting aside areas for studying boreal ecosystems. "We should use protected boreal regions less as locked-away areas and more as working laboratories." Canfor is part of just such a project in northern Alberta. Ecosystem Management by Emulating Natural Disturbances (EMEND), a large-scale study of how forest management can emulate natural disturbances, has forest companies and researchers working on 60 different projects in the forest.

As for the working parts of the boreal, Higginbotham is confident that forest companies have the ability—technical, scientific and





operational—to manage the land sustainably. Lopez, on the other hand, feels better practices and standards are in order. “We need to manage the boreal forest better,” he says. “We need more natural cutblocks, and we need to minimize disturbances to the environment.” Both men see forest certification as pushing industry closer to the goal of a sustainable boreal forest.

How do we address the different perspectives of boreal stakeholders? Higginbotham and Lopez both point to the need for cooperation and compromise.

More integrated land use is the key for Higginbotham. Users of the boreal, whether in forestry, mining, oil and gas or tourism, must cooperate more closely to reduce the number of roads and areas opened up for development—to minimize the overall footprint on the land. The provinces have a duty to fulfill here, he believes. “When awarding permits and licences to different land users, government should put forward the clear expectation that these different users work together.”

Lopez agrees that political will in the provinces is essential for the successful integration of forest needs. Overall, he sees progress on boreal issues as coming more from provincial and local initiatives than from national ones. “There can’t be one template for every circumstance, community or region,” he comments. “You can’t have templates in other areas of business, and you can’t [have them] to manage different forest areas either.”

ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

Eric Morris is Grand Chief of the Council of Yukon First Nations.

Jim Webb is the Manager of Intergovernmental and Corporate Affairs with the Little Red River Cree Nation in Alberta.

Some 600 First Nation communities live in the boreal forest, says Jim Webb. His vision of the boreal is based on those communities being able to continue their traditions and their livelihood. “First Nations have been involved in industrial activities in the forest since the fur trade. Now the principal boreal activities involve timber, minerals, and oil and gas. Currently First Nations have very little recognized ownership and control over these resources. That will have to change. A sustainable future within the boreal must be based on equitable reinstatement of First Nation resource interests.”

Eric Morris agrees that recognizing Aboriginal values and territorial uses is the only way Canada can take a truly balanced approach to sustainable boreal management. “We’ve lived here longer than anyone else,” he says. “When governments and industry decide to harvest the forest, they look at what’s there and decide what they can take. When we look at harvesting, we consider how the activity will impact everything—the land, the plants, the animals.”

Webb echoes this thought: “Aboriginal people look at the forest at the landscape level. We need to consider everything—forest activities, agriculture, oil and gas, and other resource use—because it all affects the landscape.” He finds that governments and industry still approach forest management project by project, rather than taking the holistic approach needed for sound forest decisions.

Trends that threaten to alter the boreal forest, especially in the Yukon, concern Morris. Climate change and forest fire are two phenomena he already sees affecting his territory. It’s vital to be proactive in confronting

these trends, he feels, and take actions that are best for the land. Till now forest development in the Yukon has been limited, so the territory hasn't yet experienced the environmental problems of provinces such as British Columbia, he says. "But we need to be prepared. We need to learn from other jurisdictions, from their mistakes and their lessons, so that when there's more interest in forest development in the Yukon, we're ready."

Morris believes that to deal with the competing demands on the boreal forest, the most important thing is for First Nations to be part of forest planning from the outset. "In the Yukon, First Nations that have reached the final agreement stage often have greater jurisdictional power...than the territorial government. Yet we're still treated as third parties in land use decision making. We're seen as just another stakeholder, and that's wrong."

Webb agrees. "In the absence of compelling circumstances like court cases or big economic development opportunities, very few provinces have approached First Nations in good faith with the goal of cooperating to create a sustainable future within the boreal."

Both leaders agree that the future of Canada's boreal forest depends on rethinking the role of Aboriginal people. Says Webb, "Several jurisdictions have taken the first halting steps in the process of reallocating forest resources to Aboriginal people. In the northern boreal in Ontario, Quebec and Labrador, and to some extent the Yukon, timber reallocation processes are taking place with the active involvement of First Nations. But...in other areas, where someone will have to lose something for First Nations to regain an equitable share of resources, there's no real will from the Crown to be involved and no real understanding from industry that reallocation will be part of their social licence to operate within Indian territory."



GOVERNMENT

Rich Greenwood is Director of the Forest Management Branch of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources in Sault Ste. Marie.

Marc Ledoux is Associate Deputy Minister, Forests, with the Quebec Ministry of Natural Resources and Wildlife.

In Rich Greenwood's view, Canada's ideal boreal forest is a "non-diminishing, contiguous forest that runs from sea to sea, with attributes such as biodiversity, resilience and ecological functions maintained. It also has a completed system of parks and protected areas." Protected areas, he feels, should satisfy a number of requirements, including representativeness. And he agrees with Ken Higginbotham that we should use protected areas to learn more about boreal ecosystems. That means allowing natural functions and disturbances, such as fire, to occur. "How do we let natural forest fires continue in protected areas," he wonders, "without threatening either communities in and near this forest or the forest industry? Some say the only solution is

to make our protected areas big. I think it's more complicated than that because of other values involved and pressures on forest use.”

Marc Ledoux also believes that protected areas are central to the boreal's future. In fact, he lists four social and environmental goals that, in his view, are at the heart of managing the boreal forest: 1) developing ecosystem-based forest practices, 2) recognizing and respecting Aboriginal rights, 3) establishing networks of representative protected areas and 4) keeping some forest areas as wilderness. These four goals, he stresses, must be balanced against the economic objective of keeping Canada's forest industry competitive.

Better forest practices are essential in moving towards a well-managed boreal forest, says Ledoux. “It's the great challenge over the coming years. Sustainable forest management must be done in such a way that the ecological integrity of the forest is preserved. We must continue to develop forest practices that maintain biodiversity.” To that end, the next generation of forest management plans must respect the goals of biodiversity. Innovation will also be critical, says Ledoux, since what's needed is nothing less than a new kind of forestry, one that balances commercial viability with environmental and social concerns.

“Marrying forest protection with the need for a strong forest industry represents a real challenge for Quebec,” says Ledoux. But he heralds the 2004 report from the Commission for the Study of Public Forest Management in Quebec (the Coulombe report) as steering the province closer to the “new forestry” he envisions. “This

report will lead us to preserve the heritage of our forest, including its attributes and its resources.”

For Greenwood, educating Canadians about the boreal forest is another important task. “As time goes on, forest pressures will mount globally and debates about the boreal forest will intensify. It would be nice if the owners of Canada's boreal—the public—could more fully weigh the information they receive and better participate in the critical decisions, or at a minimum, be better able to consider final decisions against others [that were] proposed.”

This task is complicated, he adds, because of the urban-rural split in our country. Many urbanites, lacking a direct connec-

tion to the forest, value forest land mostly for its recreational benefits, if they value it at all. “In university lectures,” says Greenwood, “I've asked students to think of all the forest products they use during the first hour they're awake in the morning—from their bed frames, tissue paper and cereal boxes, to their kitchen cabinets, newspapers and coffee filters. They quickly realize how much they value these products, and that if we're interested only in protecting the forest, we won't also enjoy these important forest resources.”

As for the question of how to resolve different perspectives, Ledoux feels that forest certification is an important vehicle. Through certification, environmentalists, industry and consumers can all agree on what the market will tolerate. Dialogue is also critical; it's therefore important to establish processes for people to par-



ticipate in forest decision making, especially regionally. Says Ledoux, “Lack of trust leads some parties to say ‘we are not ready to work together.’ ...However, if parties work together on something concrete, with a short-term view, it’s a first step. Often that will lead to new ways of doing things within a more favourable climate.”

Ontario has gained experience in addressing divergent forest perspectives through, for instance, the Lands for Life process of the late 1990s. According to Greenwood, the province has identified four steps that can lead to successful outcomes. First, parties must make all their information available. Second, reasonable leaders must come together. “Some parties have no intention of finding a solution except the one they put forward,” says Greenwood. “Others are willing to explore solutions... It’s important to involve the sector leaders who are serious about working towards solutions and are willing to take some risk through compromise to find them.”

The third step involves agreeing to a set of principles that reflect the key issues. In putting principles on the table, parties begin to acknowledge and learn about different points of view. The final step is to work toward solutions, keeping in mind the agreed-upon principles. “It’s meaningful that when a party sacrifices something, that sacrifice is known to all,” says Greenwood. “This results in building relationships, building understanding and building trust.”

YOUTH

Sarah Lawson has a Master’s degree in Forest Conservation from the University of Toronto and is an intern at the Lake Abitibi Model Forest in northeastern Ontario.

Aynsle Ogdén is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Forest Resource Management at the University of British Columbia.

How will climate change affect the boreal forest, especially in the southwest Yukon? That’s the question underlying Aynsle Ogdén’s doctoral research. Ogdén echoes the Yukon’s Eric Morris in saying that climate change will bring many surprises in the coming century—surprises that will challenge Canada’s ability to manage the boreal forest.

Above all, says Ogdén, climate change will alter natural disturbances in the boreal. For instance, forest fires will likely become more frequent and more intense, and pest infestations may shift. The result will be a cascade of changes across ecosystems, since disturbances affect everything from invasion by non-native species to the carbon balance of forests. These changes pose many questions for the boreal forest, says Ogdén. “We’ll be challenged as to the species that are appropriate to plant in changing conditions. And we’ll be challenged with how to maintain the ecological integrity of boreal forests and to manage carbon pools and fluxes... How we manage the boreal will have to be an ongoing experiment.”

For Ogdén, boreal management must have two goals in preparing the forest to handle natural disturbances: to build resilience and to allow forests to adapt rather than trying to return them to their previous state. “Having a resilient forest is critical,” she says. “Forests that experience fewer impacts and stresses will be better able to respond to the stresses of climate change.”

Sarah Lawson also believes that Canada needs a fresh approach to forest management. “Given how the boreal forest crosses political and geographic boundaries, there has to be a new way of looking at ecosystems in the boreal region.” An approach she finds especially intriguing is “reverse matrix” planning. To her, this approach means deciding which areas of the forest to conserve before industrial development begins. Ogdén agrees that such an approach can benefit the boreal.



questions whether satisfying all stakeholders is a realistic goal. “My first thought is whether the different perspectives really need resolving. It’s good to have divergent roles and needs for the forest. That’s part of being a democracy. We can work to achieve consensus, but people with different interests will always have different perspectives about the forest. That’s a good thing, because we can all learn and benefit from others’ views.”

But Lawson and Ogden believe that conservation cannot preclude forest use, including for economic purposes. Both stress that human use is an integral part of the boreal landscape. “There are lots of people who use the boreal for their subsistence and economic livelihood,” says Lawson. “It’s not a pristine, untouched museum. It’s a changing natural region.”

And both researchers believe that Aboriginal people, with their long history in the boreal forest, must be key players in forest management and decision making. For Lawson, the pivotal role of Aboriginal and other communities means there can be no uniform management of the boreal forest. “Forest management has to be different in each region to reflect different needs. It’s messier that way, but necessary.” For Ogden, too, local involvement is a must: “It’s important that the communities most connected to the boreal forest have a strong say in its management.”

Ogden feels that cooperative planning is the only way to include communities and arrive at forest decisions that satisfy everyone. But Lawson takes a slightly different tack. While agreeing that partnerships are the way of the future, she