

*Biodiversity,
Our Priority*

Forests

Newsletter from Québec

THE ANTALYA DECLARATION AND NATURAL FORESTS

Mr. Guy Chevrette, Minister of State for Natural Resources and Minister for Regional Development, was delighted that the resolutions ratified by the XI World Forest Congress in Antalya were compatible with Québec's forest management principles. Commenting on the *Antalya Declaration*, and especially the resolution concerning the planting of fast-growth trees, the Minister said he was more convinced than ever before that the quality of forest management in Québec offered the best possible guarantee that the natural forests would be protected and their sustainability preserved.



Assemblée nationale
du Québec

*Mr. Guy Chevrette,
Minister of State for
Natural Resources*

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QUÉBEC READY TO HOST THE NEXT WORLD FORESTRY CONGRESS

On October 23, 1997, at the closing ceremony of the XI World Forestry Congress held in Antalya, Turkey, the Canadian delegation, in cooperation with Québec, officially announced that Québec City would be a candidate to host the XII Congress. Following the announcement, Mr. Guy Chevrette, Québec's Minister of State for Natural Resources and Minister for Regional Development, said the entire population of Québec would be delighted to welcome participants to this important event.

As host of the next World Forestry Congress, Québec would have a wonderful opportunity to show the international community how, over the years, it has succeeded in developing its own unique approach to forest management - an approach that has helped it become one of the world leaders in the field.



GPH

Ice on the St. Lawrence River, in front of the Château Frontenac Hotel in Québec City.

In Québec, where 90% of all forests are managed by the State, forest management is based on a set of legislation, regulations and standards that are constantly reviewed according to needs. This evolutive and highly transparent form of forest management is well-suited to the special features of Québec's forests, and corresponds to the needs of society in general and the forest community in particular. Its basic aim is to protect the sustainability of all forest resources while ensuring that the forest management techniques used are respectful of ecosystem features and favourable to the maintenance of biodiversity throughout the forest environment.

The territory of Québec covers an area of 1.5 million square kilometres, 758,000 of which are covered by forests (2% of the world timber reserve). The forest, a diversified resource that grows naturally over large expanses, plays a key role in the lives of Québécois. On the one hand, it is a paradise for outdoor enthusiasts, especially sports fishers, campers and hikers. On the other, it is the core element of one of Québec's most important industrial sectors: the forest sector.

Québec City, birthplace of the FAO, UNESCO heritage member, a cultural and touristic gem and, to top it all, one of Canada's major forest centres, seems, in Mr. Chevrette's words, "to be a dream location for the XII World Forestry Congress".

QUÉBEC READY TO HOST THE NEXT WORLD FORESTRY CONGRESS (continued)

In fact, the capital city of the province of Québec has the highest concentration of forestry organizations in Eastern Canada, including research laboratories, educational institutions, forest sector government authorities, international forestry consulting firms, and others. Québec City is also home to a number of forest sector associations and bodies, such as the Québec Forest Industries Association, the Union pour le développement durable, the Conférence des coopératives forestières du Québec, the Fondation québécoise de la faune, and the Ordre des ingénieurs forestiers du Québec.

APPRAISING THE FOREST POLICY

The Québec government has begun a process to update its forest policy. This important exercise, involving most of the government's forest sector partners, will enable the policy to be adjusted to suit Québec's new needs.

The forest policy, introduced in the mid-1980s, was immediately hailed as one of the most innovative in Canada. This view is supported by its initial philosophy and primary objectives, which are to protect all forest resources so as to preserve the multiple uses of the forest environment, to ensure compliance with annual allowable cuts, to make the forest companies accountable for forest management, to develop the forest sector and to protect the public interest. In addition to the *Forest Act*, which forms the cornerstone of the policy, a variety of regulatory and administrative measures have been added over the years to perfect the policy and structure the roles of the individuals and organizations concerned.

Work done so far to update the forest policy has shown that, although improvements are still required in some areas, Québec is nevertheless firmly engaged on the path to sustainable forest management. The policy review also shows that Québec has succeeded in developing its own unique management approach that contributes in concrete terms to the maintenance of forest yields as well as the protection of biodiversity and all the forest's resources.

One of the features of Québec's forest policy is that it can easily



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be adapted to the changes that occur over the years in society in general and the forest sector in particular. For example, the *Forest Act* has been amended on more than 15 occasions over the last nine years, and many of these amendments were designed to adjust the legislation to Québec's evolving needs. In fact, it is only after consulting its partners (the forest industry, forest users, Native communities, the municipal community and the general public) that the government will finally be in a position to propose further amendments to the Act, at the end of its current review.

Conservation

MORE THAN 600 "EXCEPTIONAL" FORESTS

As part of the **Plan of Action for the Protection of Biological Diversity in Québec**, and more specifically the Exceptional Forest Ecosystem Knowledge and Protection Program, the Québec government has so far identified more than 600 sites. Validation of the sites is progressing well, and in the last year alone more than 100 newly-classified "exceptional" forests have been visited and analyzed, and many have been mapped. Québec's aim in doing this is to protect the forest sites whose exceptional nature has been confirmed.



Jean-François Bergeron

White pine and hemlock stand in the Ottawa region.

In Québec, exceptional forests include rare forests, old growth forests and forests sheltering threatened or endangered species. These forests are all extremely valuable from an ecological standpoint, and form a significant part of Québec's forest and touristic heritage.

In 1998, the government will adopt an initial series of measures to protect certain plant and animal species as part of its **Vulnerable Species Protection Program**. Two plant species (*Sitka Valerian* and *Cypripedium reginae* or *showy lady's-slipper*) and one animal species (the *bald eagle*) will receive protection under the new measures. By the end of this spring, approximately 30 concrete measures will have been introduced under the program.

THE "GEAIS": A SUCCESSFUL EXAMPLE OF JOINT ACTION

Under the *Forest Act*, Québec's forest companies are required to make their forest management plans available for public inspection for a period of 45 days, for information purposes. However, the general public sometimes wants to be involved more directly in the public forest management process. The work of a group of forest sector players in the Chicoutimi area (two hours by road from Québec City) provides us with an excellent example of successful cooperation in the field of sustainable forest management.

In the Shipshaw River sector, on a territory of 3,700 km², representatives of various forest sector associations (companies, the municipal community, trappers, hunters, fishers, campers, Native communities, etc.) have joined forces in a pilot project that involves them in the preparation of the forest companies' forest management plans.

Using a participatory management approach, the members of the task force for integrated management in the Shipshaw region, known by its French acronym GEAIS, make recommendations to the forest companies, analyse various integrated management proposals for the area, and develop management strategies that satisfy the interests of forest users. In all cases, the task force is guided by the principles of sustainable forest development and maintenance of biodiversity.

The GEAIS pilot project shows that it is possible for all forest users in an area to participate in the forest management planning process, and that the resulting forest management plans can satisfy all the partners.

THE WASWANAPI CREE COMMUNITY'S MODEL FOREST

Québec now has a new **model forest**, located in Waswanipi, approximately 700 km north of Montreal. The partners in the forest, which covers an area of 2,100 km², include the Donohue forest company, the Ministère des Ressources naturelles, the National Aboriginal Forestry Association and Québec City's Laval University. It was created with a view to aligning Cree traditions more closely with economic activity which, in this area, is centred on forestry and tourism. This goal will be met through a combination of traditional Cree knowledge and applied research, and in particular by developing harmonization measures in trapping areas. The main goal of Canada's **model forest network** is to accelerate the application of sustainable development in forestry practices, and especially integrated resource management.



A further goal is to identify the best policies for sustainable forestry through technical trials and advanced forestry practices.

BIODIVERSITY IN THE BOREAL BALSAM FIR FOREST

The Québec government is currently engaged in a study to assess the impact of forest management practices on the diversity of bird, small mammal, insect, plant and mushroom communities in two regions dominated by the boreal balsam fir forest. The study, led by the Ministère des Ressources naturelles, is being carried out in the Laurentians Wildlife Preserve in Northern Québec, and in the Gaspé area. It is one of the undertakings to emerge from the **Review of Forest Biodiversity** and the **Strategy for the Implementation of the Convention on Biodiversity in Québec**.

Current work involves comparing the diversity of biological communities in second growth stands at silvicultural maturity (60 years) and biological maturity (80 years), and in overmature first growth stands (80 to 110 years).

Preliminary results suggest that stands over 80 years old have a more complex structure and an abundance of snags and large wood debris. Stands over 80 years old seem to provide a more favourable habitat for drilling birds such as the black-backed woodpecker (*Picoides arcticus*) and the brown creeper (*Certhia familiaris*). The abundance and composition of insect and mushroom community taxons seem to vary according to the age of the stand.

DEVELOPMENTS IN FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Forest management practices in Québec have evolved substantially in recent years, and especially since the **Forest Protection Strategy** was launched in 1994. For example, the use of silvicultural treatments such as cutting with regeneration and soil protection, an approach that is particularly well-suited to Québec's forest ecosystems, together with commercial thinning which, among other things, enhances stand quality and increases resistance to insects, and selection cutting, has increased significantly in the public forests (90% of all forest lands in Québec are publicly owned). At the same time, certain management activities aimed at reforestation are becoming less common. In fact, stand areas decreased from 50,000 hectares in 1991 to 40,000 hectares in 1996 due to the reduction in reforestation activities. After recommending artificial regeneration of cutting areas in the early 1970s, Québec now gives priority to natural regeneration supported by appropriate silvicultural treatments.

ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE OF QUÉBEC'S PAPER MILLS

Since 1981, the quantity of organic matter dissolved in the effluent discharged by Québec's paper mills has been reduced by 97%, and the quantity of suspended matter by 87%. To comply with the government's environmental standards, the mills invested CAN\$1.7 billion in the period 1994-1996, representing 60% of all Canadian paper mill investments in this area.

As the Kyoto Summit participants were realizing with some disappointment that most countries would not be able to meet the objective of stabilizing greenhouse gas emissions at 1990 levels by the year 2000, Québec's paper mills actually reduced their own greenhouse gas emissions by 11% between 1990 and 1995.

In Québec, almost all paper mills now have their own environmental policies. They also employ specialists whose job is to raise employee awareness of the company's environmental responsibilities.

PROTECTION OF WILDLIFE SPECIES AND FOREST OPERATIONS

To protect wildlife during forest operations, the *Regulation respecting standards of forest management for forests in the public domain* requires forest companies, among other things, to preserve "separators" between cutting areas. The separators are composed of woodland strips varying in width from 60 metres to 125 metres, or forest blocks comparable in size to adjacent cutting areas.

The Québec government has recently undertaken an exhaustive study designed to see how wildlife species living in the forests (duck, snowshoe hare, moose, etc.) adapt to the forest mosaics created by the separators. Are these areas used by wildlife as permanent or temporary habitats, do they serve as migration corridors, or are they not used at all? When and in what circumstances are the separators used by wildlife species? To answer these and many other questions, the study will involve a number of partners from Québec's forest sector, including the Ministère des Ressources naturelles, the Ministère de l'Environnement et de la Faune, the Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, Laval University and the forest industry, among others.

During the study, some of the economic and operational aspects of the separators will also be assessed.



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