

*Biodiversity,
Our Priority*

Forests

Newsletter from Québec



MIRN

One of the most newsworthy subjects in Québec's forestry sector is the harmonization of forest operations and wildlife conservation. Reconciling these two issues is of particular importance because, in the forest products sector alone, Québec's annual shipments are valued at \$18.5 billion, while wildlife-related activities generate \$2.5 billion and attract nearly 4 million Québécois to the forests every year.

Forum forêt-faune

FOREST ACTIVITIES AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

The importance of this question was made clear at the recent *Forum forêt-faune* (Forest-Wildlife Forum), an annual event at which timber and wildlife users are able to talk about their concerns in their respective fields of interest. In Québec, integrated forest resource management (IRM) is new as an approach, and despite the large number of projects currently underway it is still practised on a purely voluntary basis.

At the Forum, participants (including representatives of forest companies, scientists, hunters, trappers, etc.) were able to review the scope of IRM initiatives to date, and discuss their chances of success. Some applauded the voluntary aspect of the initiatives, while others asked for a legislative framework to structure IRM applications in Québec.

According to Clifford Moar, Chief of one of Québec's largest Native communities, the Montagnais Council of Lac-Saint-Jean, IRM implementation would provide Québec's forest sector with a chance to test its capacity for compromise. Chief Moar, who regards forest resource diversity as a divine work of art, feels it is important for integrated forest resource management "to respect divine creation". Using language full of imagery, Chief Moar compared IRM to "a marriage of both love and reason", and concluded that Québec's marriage had every chance of success, provided the people concerned chose the path of dialogue and compromise.

At the Forum forêt-faune, Clifford Moar, Chief of the Montagnais Council of Lac-Saint-Jean (on the left), receives a satellite map of Québec's forests from Marc-André Bédard, President of the Boreal Forest Research Consortium.



RODRIGUE BEGIN

THE BOREAL FOREST: NATURE-BASED FOREST MANAGEMENT

From a strict timber production standpoint, is it better to manage forests based on their natural features, or to manage artificial forests? This question, often debated at international conferences, brings into play two approaches used to address needs and criteria that differ considerably from one timber producing country to the next.

The “natural” approach is often selected by countries such as Québec, that have huge virgin forest reserves, while the “artificial” approach tends to be preferred by countries whose remaining reserves of natural forest land are very small, and hence of great value and untouchable. However, because of their small size, these reserves cannot always play their role as pools of biodiversity.

According to researchers from the Canadian Forestry Service and the ministère des Ressources naturelles, both in Québec City, these two approaches are not mutually exclusive. It is therefore possible to set aside some sections of the forest for intensive timber production while managing others in a way that promotes ecosystem conservation but still allows some timber to be harvested.

The two agencies are involved in ongoing research to test the possibility of managing the boreal forest (which accounts for 70% of Québec’s productive forest land) so as to preserve its natural features. The goal is to maintain the number of trees of each species represented in a given area, while preserving a balanced age and size distribution and obtaining a balanced geographical distribution of species such as the black spruce and the fir.



Québec’s boreal forest

“In the future, one of the main challenges of forestry research in Québec will be to establish criteria that will allow the natural features of the forest to be preserved in forest management plans,” said René Doucet, a researcher from the ministère des Ressources naturelles. In this respect, one of the observations made by researchers in Québec is that disturbance elements, whether natural or man-made (burning, soil scarification), have a very important role to play in boreal forest management.

In Québec, 80% of the boreal forest is renewed by natural regeneration. Researchers say this does not necessarily eliminate the need for activities to promote renewal in the forest. At the same time, however, the forest must be managed in a way that enables society to benefit from several resources at once. Since this involves compromise, choices need to be made by society rather than by science, and the common myth that an unmanaged forest will give of its best to humanity needs to be overturned.



A LOOK AT BLOCK CUTTING

Québec has recently witnessed some highly original initiatives in the field of sustainable forest management.

One of the most interesting cases is without question that of Alliance Forest Products, a large forestry company to which the government has allocated a territory of some 12,000 km² under a timber supply and forest management agreement. The territory in question is located in the Lac-Saint-Jean public forest (250 km north of Québec City) and contains approximately 60 million cubic metres of mature softwood trees. Since 1995, the company has voluntarily applied a form of logging that is becoming increasingly popular in Québec, namely block cutting.

Block cutting as practised by Alliance Forest Products involves dividing the annual harvest of mature forest blocks into three successive operations over time and in space. Each forest block measures approximately 1 km². The average harvest extends over 30 hectares in the fir forest and 50 hectares in the spruce forest.

In the first operation (year 1), around 50% of the trees are cut in each block. The second operation takes place between 8 and 12 years later, when new growth in the year 1 blocks is approximately 3 metres high. During this second operation, around 40% of the remaining mature trees in those blocks are cut. As stipulated in Québec's regulations, 30% of the forest cover composed of trees 7 metres or more in height are preserved for every portion of public land measuring between 300 and 500 km².

The third and last operation takes place between 16 and 24 years after the first, when the young stands derived from the year 1 treatment have grown to a height of 7 metres.

For Jacques Bélanger, head of forestry at Alliance Forest Products, block cutting has many advantages, even though it involves higher costs than traditional treatments (e.g. a more extensive road network and increased transportation costs). *"It is a method that has very positive impacts on wildlife maintenance. It also promotes leisure activity and preserves forest landscapes. It is therefore more socially acceptable and it is not surprising that the general public and the majority of forest users have welcomed our initiative,"* he says.



***Jacques Bélanger, head of
forestry at Alliance Forest
Products***



A FOREST THAT FASCINATES VISITORS

Halfway between Hull and Mont-Laurier, approximately 250 km north-west of Montreal, lies one of the most fascinating forests in Québec. Known as "La Forêt de l'Aigle" (Eagle Forest), it covers an area of 140 km² and is rich in large white and red pines and mature hardwoods. A new approach in Québec, namely the inhabited forest concept, has been tested in the *Forêt de l'Aigle*. The aim of this approach, grosso modo, is to increase economic activity in forest areas by encouraging the general public to become involved in the management and development of the forests and their various resources.

The *Forêt de l'Aigle* was created thanks in part to the technical and financial support of the ministère des Ressources naturelles du Québec. It is administered by a private non-profit corporation whose board of directors is composed of six contributing members representative of the community: the Institut québécois d'aménagement de la forêt feuillue, the Société sylvicole de la Haute-Gatineau, the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg Native Nation, the Pontiac Reserve hunting and fishing association, the White Bear snowmobiling club and the Cayamant municipality.

In this forest, "inhabited" by a nature-loving population and possessing abundant wildlife and leisure potential, territorial management is sustainable and guided more by the rules of socio-economic development than by purely forest-related concerns. Development is planned mainly by consensus among the corporation members, who are aware of local needs.

While forest operations are carried out in a way that is conducive to the maintenance of wildlife and leisure activities, the forest has also been developed for its timber potential, and the operations planning process takes into account the features of each individual forest ecosystem. For example, horses are used instead of tractors, to preserve the trees and avoid unnecessary damage. Currently, one-sixth of the production in this fascinating forest is dependent on the use of horses rather than horsepower.



In the Forêt de l'Aigle, horses are sometimes used to avoid damaging the trees.

THE WORLD FORESTRY CONGRESS- DRAPED IN THE VIBRANT COLOURS OF FALL

The next World Forestry Congress will be held in Québec City in September 2003, at a time of the year when Québec's hardwood forests are at their most flamboyant. The colourful transformation of the fall foliage is bound to charm participants at this important event.

The 12th World Forestry Congress in 2003 is being organized jointly by the Canadian Forestry Service, Natural Resources Canada and the ministère des Ressources naturelles du Québec. The Congress Web site can now be consulted at either of the following addresses:



Québec City in the snow.

www.cfm2003.org or www.wfc2003.org

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TEXTS

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