

**Forests for Life:
Recovery for Forestry, Climate, and Nature**

WRITTEN SUBMISSION

HOUSE OF COMMONS
STANDING COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
Study on Economic Recovery in the Forestry Sector

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By Florence Daviet
National Director, Forest Program
Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS)

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Our recommendations are that the federal government:

RECOMMENDATION #1

Support innovators aiming to implement strategies to limit our footprint, especially in areas that currently have a very limited or no industrial footprint or that have high biodiversity values.

RECOMMENDATION #2

Support improved science and knowledge of how activities in forests are directly and indirectly causing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and biodiversity impacts, ensuring that we don't underestimate these impacts and can effectively implement policies and measures to avoid and mitigate them, such as by expanding the scope of the *Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act*.

RECOMMENDATION #3

Support the development of partnerships and tools to recognize the non-timber value of forests – such as for natural infrastructure benefits for flooding, fires, water quality, food security and other values.

RECOMMENDATION #4

Fund innovative partnerships that look at avoiding, mitigating, and/or demand-related considerations to find solutions that will also result in valuable jobs for communities.

RECOMMENDATION #5

Fund and promote life-cycle assessments that also consider the ecosystem carbon and biodiversity effects of the different products being compared and support those seeking to move their businesses in a new direction with more value added and long-lived wood products that support local jobs.

RECOMMENDATION #6

Support partnerships with Indigenous communities seeking to manage forest lands with a lighter human footprint, both through avoiding and mitigation practices, and including by restoring damaged forest areas with important non-timber values, such as food security.

About CPAWS

The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) is Canada's only nationwide charity dedicated solely to the protection of our public land, ocean and freshwater, with 13 regional, territorial and provincial chapters from coast to coast to coast. We work collaboratively with all levels of government, industry, and other environmental groups to develop innovative conservation solutions. Integral to our work are long-standing relationships with Indigenous communities seeking to manage their lands and natural resources for both timber and non-timber values.

The CPAWS Forest Program focuses primarily on providing policy solutions to improve the management of our forests in order to address issues related to climate change and species at risk. I have been working on this topic since 2005, both in Canada and internationally.

Introduction

This brief provides recommendations on how the federal government can target forestry recovery funding towards smarter solutions from a climate mitigation and biodiversity perspective and move beyond business as usual through research, innovation and collaboration.

This document builds on recommendations from our 2019 report *Finding Common Ground: Six Steps For Tackling Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss in Canada*, our *Recommendation for a Nature Based Climate Solution Fund*, our 2020 Parks Report *Healthy Nature, Healthy People: A Call to Put Nature Protection at the Heart of Canada's COVID-19 Recovery Strategies*, and the Green Budget Coalition's *Recommendations for Recovery and Budget Actions in 2020-2021* (references at the end of this brief).

Analysis

In our view, reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and biodiversity loss in our forests while supporting local jobs and health communities requires adopting the following strategies.

Strategy 1: Avoid Impacts

By its very nature, industrial forestry activity has an associated GHG emission and biodiversity impact. As a consequence, we need to identify, and support those willing to implement strategies to limit our footprint, especially in areas that currently have a very limited or no industrial footprint or that have high biodiversity values. By making room for nature, we can further multiple objectives:

- meet our international goals to protect 30% of land and water by 2030
- protect species at risk that are sensitive to human footprint – like caribou
- reduce emissions from human activities by “harvesting less,” as highlighted by several Canadian Forest Service research papers, and
- reduce risks of forest fires caused by human activities

RECOMMENDATION #1

Support innovators aiming to implement strategies to limit our footprint, especially in areas that currently have a very limited or no industrial footprint or that have high biodiversity values.

Strategy 2: Reduce Impacts

Fundamentally, climate-smart products come from wood baskets¹ that have stable or increasing forest area and carbon stock, as well as being managed for species at risk and other sustainability criteria. Some of Canada's wood baskets likely do not meet these criteria, as a result of climate-related (e.g., pine beetle) and/or direct human (harvesting) action. Management practices that can help already exist.

The government should continue to research and support forest management practices with climate and biodiversity benefits. A few examples are:

- lengthening the rotation ages of the trees being cut
- ensuring forests – including landing areas – are prepared to allow for regrowth to reduce the time with no sequestration
- replanting areas where natural regrowth – even with prepping – has been shown to be untenable
- reducing glyphosate spraying, which is found to have an impact on the flammability of forests and its biodiversity
- recognizing the non-timber values of forests through markets and other tools

We should continue to study the GHG emission and biodiversity impacts of industrial forestry activities and the non-timber values of forests. Forests are complex ecosystems, gaps in knowledge still exist and as a result the impacts are underestimated and measures to reduce them are not well known. We need to continue to advance our knowledge.

RECOMMENDATION #2

Support improved science and knowledge of how activities in forests are directly and indirectly causing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and biodiversity impacts, ensuring that we don't underestimate these impacts and can effectively implement policies and measures to avoid and mitigate them, such as by expanding the scope of the *Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act*.

RECOMMENDATION #3

Support the development of partnerships and tools to recognize the non-timber value of forests – such as for natural infrastructure benefits for flooding, fires, water quality, food security and other values.

¹ The area of forest supplying the timber for a given mill or area.

Strategy 3: Reduce Impacts through Substitution and Demand Measures

Wood products provide essential and sustainable goods and services. The federal government can play a role in ensuring that wood products offset the use of other products that are more detrimental to biodiversity and climate while incentivizing the creation of local jobs, by:

- continuing to advance life cycle assessments that include the ecosystem carbon and biodiversity effects of the different choices, and
- support those seeking to move their businesses in a new direction with more value-added and long-lived wood products that support local jobs

However, we must not overlook that substitution is only valuable if our overall footprint does not increase – both from a GHG emissions and biodiversity perspective – regardless of which industry is considered. The world currently faces twin biodiversity and climate crises. We know that simply growing our emissions and biodiversity loss rate more slowly is insufficient to address these crises. Rather, we must turn the trajectory around. In addition to prioritizing high-value and durable wood products, education programs around reducing consumption and waste need to continue.

RECOMMENDATION #4

Fund innovative partnerships that look at avoiding, mitigating, and/or demand-related considerations to find solutions that will also result in valuable jobs for communities.

RECOMMENDATION #5

Fund and promote life-cycle assessments that also consider the ecosystem carbon and biodiversity effects of the different products being compared and support those seeking to move their businesses in a new direction with more value added and long-lived wood products that support local jobs.

Strategy 4. Supporting Indigenous Communities

Across Canada, many Indigenous governments and communities are seeking, in a manner that represents specific values and rights, to manage forests with a lighter footprint, while ensuring livelihoods for Indigenous communities. In some cases, this includes looking at implementing Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) and promoting non-timber values. Knowledge of the land and the timber and non-timber values of the forests will be a vital part of improving the management of our forests for climate and biodiversity values. Alone and in partnership with others, supporting such initiatives to consider all the above three strategies will be a key part of ensuring that this recovery also supports increasing equity and reconciliation efforts.

RECOMMENDATION #6

Support partnerships with Indigenous communities seeking to manage forest lands with a lighter human footprint, both through avoiding and mitigation practices, and including by restoring damaged forest areas with important non-timber values, such as food security.

Conclusion

As has been noted with recovery recommendations for other sectors, supporting the recovery of the forestry industry should be linked to improving our knowledge of the climate and biodiversity impacts of our activities and finding ways to keep doing things better for nature, climate and communities.

References

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