

Canadian Institute of Forestry/Institut forestier du Canada  
“Voice of Forest Practitioners”

## *Position Statement*

### *Ecological Reserves*

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#### **Background**

The Canadian Institute of Forestry/Institut forestier du Canada (CIF/IFC) views ecological reserves as an important aspect of the conservation of Canada’s forest diversity. Excluded from the reserves are most human activities as well as the use of forest management techniques for the restoration of degraded ecosystems. Human activities regarding forests, including protection against fire, insects and diseases, may affect natural forest ecosystem functioning and have the potential to change succession patterns and biodiversity.

#### **CIF/IFC’s position**

The CIF/IFC advocates two broad types of ecological reserves: 1) smaller special reserves that are created for the protection of rare habitats or populations; and 2) larger reserves established in various ecoregions to promote the conservation of representative landscape types and forest mosaics. Special reserves should focus on unique genotypes, rare and endangered species, as well as fragile habitats, communities or populations. Larger ecological reserves, used to conserve landscape types, should consider the size of natural disturbances and the habitat and migration requirements of regionally important wildlife species. In practice, larger reserves are often parks established prior to the development of the principles of conservation biology. As such, they may not always adequately serve to protect the fauna that migrate into and out of these parks.

The CIF/IFC advocates that all ecological reserves, regardless of their size, should be managed at the regional or landscape level. Therefore, the CIF/IFC recognizes that the lands adjacent to ecological reserves may require special management strategies consistent with the goals of ecological reserves. For example, the location of forest patches of varying ages, types and sizes outside reserves should be planned relative to conditions within the reserve. Indeed, animals should be able to migrate to and from ecological reserves in order to promote genetic health of their populations.

Ecological reserves should be representative of all terrestrial ecosystems of Canada. Particularly, reserves should encompass both productive and non-productive forest types. In places where past forest management practices have reduced the distribution of forest types and habitats, the CIF/IFC promotes the use of management practices that lead to ecosystem restoration. This challenge is evident in the most populated parts of the



country where deforestation as a result of agriculture, transportation and urbanization has affected forest distribution and biodiversity.

The CIF/IFC encourages all governments to promote and pursue the establishment of ecological reserves representative of the eco-regions of Canada and conduct scientific research dealing with the monitoring and functioning of ecological reserves. We recognize there is insufficient knowledge to predict the long-term effects of human activities on forests. Therefore, the establishment of ecological reserves should be supported to provide the necessary benchmarks for future generations to enjoy, and to facilitate research on natural ecological processes. These conditions are best maintained through a conservation approach to management. When management must be conducted in ecological reserves, it should emulate natural disturbance patterns.

The establishment of ecological reserves should be part of a multi-stakeholder and public involvement process. Indeed, Canadians of all walks of life are entitled and needed to partake in the decision process leading to the establishment of ecological reserves.

The CIF/IFC encourages Canadian governments at national and provincial levels to work towards completing their plans to provide for protected areas.

#### **The CIF/IFC**

The Canadian Institute of Forestry / Institut forestier du Canada (CIF/IFC) is a national voice of forest practitioners. The CIF/IFC, formed in 1908, represents members who are foresters, forest technologists and technicians, educators, scientists and others with a professional interest in forestry. The Institute's mission is *"to provide national leadership in forestry, promote competence among forestry professionals, and foster public awareness of Canadian and international forestry issues."*

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