



Sorting The Myths From Facts Of Deforestation In Canada

In Canadian forestry today, one of the most significant and most misunderstood issues is deforestation. The internationally defined definition of deforestation is “the direct human-induced conversion of forest to non-forest land.”¹ Only 0.02% of Canada’s forested area has been deforested², yet there remain many misconceptions about deforestation. This article addresses those misconceptions and highlights sustainable forest management practices in Canada.

Deforestation Background:

- Deforestation is a serious issue globally, impacting biodiversity, soil fertility, water and climate change when forest cover is reduced because of agriculture, infrastructure, residential development, and other land uses.
- Deforestation only occurs when forests are permanently removed so the land can be used for something else.
- Harvesting, forest fires, and insect infestations do not always constitute deforestation
- Canada’s National Deforestation Monitoring System detects areas of forest cover change using satellite images acquired years apart.
- Expert satellite image interpreters use a variety of data sources to determine if an observed forest change is deforestation.
- Canada is a world leader in sustainable forest management – Canadian forests are healthy, productive, and thriving.

Deforestation in Canada:

- Deforestation in Canada is among the world’s lowest, accounting for only 0.3% of global deforestation or about 34,200 hectares.³ This is due to the spread of urban lands, agriculture and resource extraction such as oil and mineral extraction.
- As a world leader in sustainable forest management, the health of Canadian forests is closely monitored by scientists and forest professionals across the country.
- In Canada provincial regulations require every tree that is harvested on public land is replanted or naturally regenerated– this practice means that new trees replace the ones that were harvested, allowing the forest to grow and provide benefits for all Canadians (94% of Canada’s forests are on public land⁴).

¹ <http://www.treefrogcreative.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/NRCan-Deforestation-Article-Feb-2019-web.pdf>

² <https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/our-natural-resources/forests-forestry/wildland-fires-insects-disturban/deforestation-canada-key-myths-and-facts/13419>

³ <https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/our-natural-resources/forests-forestry/wildland-fires-insects-disturban/deforestation-canada-key-myths-and-facts/13419>

⁴ <https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/our-natural-resources/forests-forestry/wildland-fires-insects-disturban/deforestation-canada-key-myths-and-facts/13419>



- Professional foresters take extra care when managing forests to protect wildlife and important habitat features like streams, birds' nests, wildlife calving areas, etc.
- The forest industry is an important sector of the Canadian economy and produces a range of products we depend on everyday (i.e. wood for house building, papers and pencils for school, and various other products such as medicines and food).
- When you buy Canadian wood products, you're ensuring that the wood was sustainably harvested and not contributing to deforestation.
- Sustainable forest management takes into account the environment, social and economic values, and benefits of the forest over time.
- Professional foresters use computer models so that they can evaluate different forest activities and determine how they impact the habitat of vertebrate species, forest composition, recreational values and timber production. The computer models used in Ontario project forest composition and structure as a result of cumulative harvest and natural disturbances a hundred years into the future.
- In Canada – forest management practices help to create a mix of young and older forests that benefits our native forest-dwelling species. The proportion of old, middle aged and young forests, plus the mix of different tree species is based on an analysis of the forest through computer modelling and monitoring of the real forest to ensure that the results expected are achieved.
- Some animals such as moose and bear require younger and recently harvested forests for food sources that are only found in recently naturally disturbed forests such as through fire or recently harvested and regenerated forests (browse and blueberries) while they find shelter in nearby older forests.
- Other species such as American Marten and the Northern Goshawk require large blocks of contiguous forest cover.

For more information on the myths and facts of deforestation in Canada, visit Natural Resources Canada's [website](#).

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