



Global Forest Watch Canada

Linking Forests and People

Satellite Imagery Reveals New Picture of Canada's Wild Forests

OTTAWA, September 15, 2003 – Results of the most comprehensive survey to date of Canada's wild forests were released today in Ottawa by Global Forest Watch Canada. Using highly sophisticated satellite imagery, *Canada's Large Intact Forest Landscapes* reveals that 40 percent of Canada's forests have been fragmented by industrial activity, while 60 percent - almost entirely in the northern boreal region – remain intact.

“Although many previous studies have shown the enormous extent of Canada's existing forests, none have identified those that remain ecologically intact and un-fragmented by development activities such as logging, road-building, mining, and oil and gas exploration. We've been able to show for the first time, how much of our large, intact forest landscapes are left,” said Peter Lee, ecologist and national coordinator of Global Forest Watch Canada.

Large intact forest landscapes - areas untouched by industrial activity for at least 50 years and large enough to preserve all of their naturally occurring species and ecological processes - remain in only a limited number of regions on earth – including the boreal forests of North America and Russia, and the rainforests of the Amazon, Central Africa and South East Asia. In Canada, nearly 340 million hectares, or 60 percent of the forested landscapes examined in this study, remain intact. Of these remaining large intact forest landscapes, the national and provincial parks systems protect only seven percent.

There are no longer any large intact forest landscapes in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick or Prince Edward Island. Nearly two-thirds of Canada's remaining large intact forests are located in one territory and three provinces – Quebec, the Northwest Territories, Ontario and British Columbia (in that order of importance). Manitoba, Saskatchewan and the Yukon Territory also contain sizable stretches of intact forestlands.

The vast majority (over 90 percent) of Canada's remaining large intact forest landscapes can be found in a broad belt of forests stretching across Canada's boreal region. These boreal landscapes are a rich mosaic of forestlands, rivers, lakes, and wetlands found north of the forests of the temperate zone.

Canada's southern biodiversity-rich temperate forests have been largely fragmented by human development. Ninety percent of all the remaining large intact temperate forests are found in the mountains of British Columbia and are composed mostly of alpine terrain.

“The intact forest landscapes identified in *Canada's Large Intact Forest Landscapes* are of significant global ecological value, providing vital services to all forms of life,” said Dr. David Schindler, Killam Memorial Professor of Ecology at the University of Alberta and a Fellow of the prestigious Royal Society who acted as a special advisor to the

project. “These findings underscore the need for Canada to manage our remaining wild landscapes in a precautionary manner,” says Dr. Schindler.

Intact forest landscapes are becoming increasingly rare at the global level, due in large part to their vulnerability to the effects of large-scale human interventions—effects that are not easily or quickly reversed.

“Given the amount of intact forests left in Canada’s boreal, we have a unique opportunity to ensure that the region remains a key source of clean air, clean water and abundant wildlife for all Canadians. Clearly, the time to plan for conserving Canada’s boreal forests is now – before this window of opportunity closes,” says Cathy Wilkinson, Director of the independent Ottawa-based Canadian Boreal Initiative (CBI). The CBI helped to support this study, “because we recognize how essential it is to have good data available to inform work at the policy level,” adds Wilkinson.

Initial funding for the report was provided by the home furnishings company IKEA with additional support from the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Canadian Boreal Initiative. Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI), and Leica Geosystems Geographic Imaging (ERDAS) donated in-kind mapping software support. GeoGratis of Natural Resources Canada, the University of Maryland’s Global Land Cover Facility and Landsat.org of Michigan State University donated numerous satellite images.

Canada’s Large Intact Forest Landscapes was produced in collaboration with members of the Global Forest Watch network in Canada, the U.S. and Russia. The maps from the report will be widely accessible in electronic and hardcopy formats to provide a baseline for practical decision-making in Canada’s forests.

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Global Forest Watch Canada is the independent national affiliate of the Global Forest Watch network, a project of the World Resources Institute. The Global Forest Watch network was formed to provide access to better information about the world’s forests and the environmental impact of their development.

Canada’s Large Intact Forest Landscapes, including maps and data, as well as media briefing materials are available at both www.globalforestwatch.org and www.globalforestwatch.ca

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