



Backgrounder: Where Land and Waters Meet: An Assessment of Canada's Riparian Forest Management Standards

EDMONTON, July 2004 – Canada's forested shoreline -- or riparian -- areas are weakly protected under federal and provincial laws and policy guidelines. That is the conclusion of a new report from Global Forest Watch Canada.

The report, *Where Land and Waters Meet: An Assessment of Canada's Riparian Forest Management Standards*, analyses the existing regimes for the management and protection of forests found along the banks of streams, lakes, and wetlands across Canada. The report identifies a vast array of differing standards and policy instruments for the conservation and management of Canada's riparian forests.

The protection of riparian forests during forestry operations has been internationally and nationally recognized as an important objective for sustainable forest management. The objective of this report is to illuminate the extent and nature of the protection available for riparian forests across Canada, excepting Nunavut, which has a relatively minor forest sector. This report interprets the legal and policy provisions for riparian forest protection afforded by the federal and provincial governments according to a consistent analytical framework. The analytical framework is a standard definition for the common terms, "buffer zone," "reserve zone," and "management zone." This consistent framework is necessary to facilitate the comparison of the various standards for the protection of riparian forests. This report was developed from a review of Canadian legal and policy protections for riparian forests prepared for Global Forest Watch Canada by the Environmental Law Centre of the University of Victoria, Faculty of Law, in British Columbia.

Key Findings:

- Riparian reserve zones, which would prohibit most logging or road-building in riparian forests, are not commonly required for forest management in Canada.
- The most noticeable differences in riparian forest standards are found within the boreal forest, which stretches across all of northern Canada, where riparian forest buffer zones vary from no protection at all to a requirement for a 100-metre management zone.
- Canada's standards for riparian forest protection on large streams and lakes in the boreal forest are significantly weaker than comparable standards in Russia, which require riparian management zones of up to 1,000-metres.
- The Northwest Territories is the only jurisdiction in Canada that has mandatory no logging reserve zones (60-metres) on all its streams, lakes and wetlands.
- Manitoba has a requirement for 100-metre wide forest management zones on all waterbodies. (Logging and/or road-building are permissible within riparian management zones.)
- Although most jurisdictions permit logging within buffer zones to remove trees at risk of windthrow, New Brunswick is the only jurisdiction that has a policy of doubling the size of its forested management zones if there is a high risk of windthrow within the minimum 30-metre buffer.

- Ontario and other jurisdictions have policies of enhancing riparian buffer zones where other wildlife values are present. For example, in north-western Ontario where Caribou utilize streamside migration corridors, a 2,000-metre management zone is prescribed.

Although shoreline areas have always been affected by natural disturbances, from the changes wrought by fire or wind to the impact of beavers felling trees, they are increasingly being affected by industrial activities, particularly by logging. Industrial impacts can range from the very direct (e.g., building a road or bridge, or logging directly within riparian zones), to the indirect (e.g., cutting in upland forests can alter light, temperature and exposure).

Where Land and Waters Meet: An Assessment of Canada's Riparian Forest Management Standards, including maps and satellite pictures, as well as media briefing materials, is available for download at: **www.globalforestwatch.ca**

For more information contact:
Peter Lee (National Coordinator, GFWC)
(780) 914 6241 OR (780) 451 9260