



Global Forest Watch Canada

## Expanding Human Disturbance Footprint in Quebec's Broadback River Watershed

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During 2015, the Cree Nation Government and the Government of Quebec announced an expansion of protected areas in the Broadback River watershed. Despite this positive step toward greater conservation, mapping analyses from satellite images shows that the watershed, and the boreal forest to the south and east of it, experienced a significant expansion of human development between 1980 and 2015.

The analyses, conducted by Global Forest Watch Canada (GFWC), examined the length of linear and area-based disturbances in the Broadback River watershed. The mapping and analyses identified a total of 4,289 km of linear features (e.g. roads and transmission lines) and 1,150 km<sup>2</sup> of area-based disturbances (e.g. logging cutblocks and mines) in the watershed by 2015. When these disturbances are buffered to account for broader ecological impacts, the disturbances amounted to 4,294 km<sup>2</sup> by 2015, or 20% of the watershed, compared to 456 km<sup>2</sup>, or 2% in 1980. The portion of the watershed in the commercial forest zone had a disturbance footprint of 27%. The Broadback River watershed includes 50 Cree traplines, various mining claims, and 54% of it is allotted to forest tenures.

“Our analyses reveal that logging, and associated road building, have been the most significant development activities in the watershed,” said Wynet Smith, Executive Director of GFWC. “Logging cutblocks accounted for 99% of all area-based disturbances while roads accounted for 92% of all linear features.”

“Although the amount of development has increased significantly in the past 35 years in the watershed, it is still much less than in the commercial forest area to the south and east,” said Smith. “That area is now over 50% affected by the cumulative anthropogenic footprint.”

Cree traplines have been significantly disturbed as a result of the on-going development activities. While 20 traplines intersecting the watershed had no disturbance as of 1980; only 4 had no disturbance by 2015 and 18 were more than 25% affected. The traplines in the area south of the Broadback River watershed were even more affected by disturbances, with 22 of 48 having more than 50% disturbance.

The analyses conducted is available in a report on the Broadback River watershed on the GFWC website at: [www.globalforestwatch.ca](http://www.globalforestwatch.ca). The datasets are also available for free at the same site.

“The Government of Quebec and the Cree Nation Government have taken an important step by protecting 28.5% of the Broadback River watershed. We’re very hopeful that this detailed analyses of human-caused disturbances in this area will help the Quebec Government and Crees to monitor and plan carefully for maintaining the integrity of this important watershed,” said Smith.

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