

In 1986, Québec adopted the *Forest Act* initiating a major shift in forest management. The new Act revoked the old timber limits, ending a timber allocation system that had allowed a handful of forestry companies to obtain control over virtually all the timber in the public forests. The Act also introduced new rules applicable to forests in the domain of the State:



Compliance at all times with the allowable annual cut; Restoration of sites to production after logging; Respect for the forest environment and preservation of its resources to allow for multiple use; and Payment of cutting dues based on stumpage values. The *Forest Act* established new timber allocation mechanisms known as the timber supply and forest management agreements (TSFMA), the forest management agreements and the forest management contracts.

## The Timber Supply and Forest Management Agreement (TSFMA)

The government guarantees long-term supplies for the forest companies, but in return it requires them to manage the forest in a way that will maintain or improve its productivity. The reciprocal commitments of the government and the companies are set out in timber supply and forest management agreements, which have become essential tools in the forest management process.

A **TSMFA** covers a period of 25 years, and is revised once every five years, at which time it may be extended for a further five-year period if the holder has fulfilled its obligations. Among other things, the government requires agreement holders to prepare general forest management plans and annual plans, which are submitted to the Minister for approval. In the plans, the companies must describe the activities they intend to carry out in the areas in which they are authorized to harvest wood. They must also manage the forests so as to achieve the yields stipulated in their agreements, and to carry out all their work in accordance with the Regulation respecting standards of forest management for forests in the public domain - in other words, by maintaining or reconstituting the forest canopy after logging and protecting all forest resources.

## The Forest Management Agreement (FMA)

The Minister may allow parties that do not have wood processing mill operating permits to cut trees in the public forests if this would be in the interests of the general public or a specific community. A forest management agreement, signed by its holder and the Minister, allows the holder to harvest volumes of wood not allocated by means of a TSFMA in one or more management units, and then sell that wood to a processing mill. FMA holders have the same obligations as TSFMA holders, and are also jointly responsible for the work done in the management units to which their agreements apply.

## The Forest Management Contract (FMC)

The Minister may sometimes authorize the harvesting of wood in forest reserves in order to promote regional economic development. This is done by means of a forest management contract (FMC). Contract holders - usually regional county municipalities, Native communities or regional development agencies - have the same obligations as TSFMA and FMA holders.

## One-Time Harvesting

When a TSFMA holder gives up all or part of the volume allocated for a given year, or does not harvest the volume stipulated in the general forest management plan for the current five-year period, the Minister may grant a third party the right to cut the volumes in question by awarding a one-time harvesting permit.

The holder of a one-time harvesting permit must be involved in preparing the annual forest management plans and the annual forest management reports required by law for the management unit in question, and must also reimburse the TSFMA holder for any amounts paid in respect of those volumes to the Forest Fund, the Société de protection des forêts contre le feu (SOPFEU) and the Société de protection des forêts contre les insectes et les maladies (SOPFIM).

## Harvesting Shrubs and Half-Shrubs

The government authorizes the harvesting of certain shrubs and half-shrubs, such as the Canadian yew, to promote multiple forest use. Permit holders must comply with forest protection standards and standards for the preservation of the species in question, and must also harmonize their activities

## Standards of Forest Management

April 1996, the Québec government adopted a new *Regulation respecting standards of forest management for forests in the public domain (RSFM)*, with the goals of harmonizing forestry with the other activities taking place in Québec's public forests, and promoting certification of forest products.

## Objectives of the RSFM

The RSFM is designed to:

- protect all forest resources (water, wildlife, timber, soils);
- assure the maintenance or reconstitution of the forest canopy;
- achieve greater compatibility of forest uses, in particular by preserving high quality landscapes around leisure and public utility facilities;
- promote sustainable forest management.

## Principal Standards

During logging, for example, the forest companies must protect young established trees and avoid damaging the soil with their machinery. Where precautions such as these are applied, approximately 80% of logging areas regenerate naturally. The remaining 20% require reforestation.

Forest companies are now required to preserve stands measuring seven metres or more in height over 30% of the productive area of each unit. As a result, logging sites are distributed more evenly, both spatially and over time. Residual stands on the fringes of logging areas are also preserved until the regeneration has grown to an average height of three metres in the logged area.

The current standards of forest management ensure the maintenance of sites in the ten wildlife habitat categories recognized by the government. They are therefore favourable to the reproduction of certain species, including the moose, white-tailed deer, caribou, muskrat, great blue heron, black-crowned night-heron and bird colonies on cliffs, islands and peninsulas.

Québec has an average of 14 km of watercourses and 37 km of shoreline for every 10 km<sup>2</sup> of surface area. It is therefore easy to understand why the government assigns so much importance to the drainage network and its dependent resources. Many of the Regulation's provisions are aimed at protecting the quality of the aquatic environment. For example, forest companies working near a lake or watercourse, or building permanent or temporary culverts or bridges, must comply with strict measures to minimize disturbance of waterways and shorelines.

Leisure activities have also been promoted, since the general public is increasingly eager to use the forests and their resources for leisure purposes. The forest companies are now required to maintain a 60-m wide buffer strip around public utility and leisure facilities, and to maintain a visual frame over an area of up to 1.5 km, depending on site topography.