



Ontario



Help shape the future of our forests:

Get involved in managing our public forests.

Policy Division | Crown Forests and Lands Policy Branch

March 2025

Get involved in managing our public forests

Land acknowledgement

We acknowledge the long history of the lands referenced in this document. The forests currently managed by the Ministry of Natural Resources (the ministry) were cared for by Indigenous peoples long before the inception of Canada, Ontario or the ministry. They continue to be taken care of by Indigenous peoples today.

Our ministry separates, describes and manages the forest using geographic boundaries like management units. Although we apply this kind of system, we understand that it may be different from traditional concepts and views of the forest. We appreciate that the landscape may be understood in different ways.

We recognize that our ministry needs to work closely with Indigenous communities to achieve the goal of sustainably managing the forest for generations to come.

Indigenous communities' unique rights and interests

Indigenous communities have unique rights and interests from other people in Ontario. These may include Aboriginal and treaty rights, recognized and affirmed in [*Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982*](#) and interests as peoples with distinct cultures, histories, languages, perspectives, needs and aspirations

The ways Indigenous communities can be involved or are consulted in forest management planning are outlined below and explained in further detail in the [Handbook for getting involved in forest management on public lands in Ontario](#).

Why get involved

Get involved in forest management and have a say in the future of our shared forests.

To have healthy forests tomorrow, we need to look after them today. We [sustainably manage](#) our public forests to meet our present and future needs (cultural, environmental, social and economic necessities).

Although, the ministry is responsible for managing public forests, there is also a significant role for Indigenous communities and the public.

To achieve sustainability we must consider how all users value the forest. Your involvement helps us determine and balance the goals for managing our forests.

Consider getting involved if you are interested in, or use the forest for things like:

- hunting, fishing and trapping
- traditional activities such as gathering, family harvesting, ceremonies
- recreational activities like hiking, canoeing, camping, cottaging
- business interests like tourist operations, forest operations
- cultural heritage or conservation

The purpose of a forest management plan

Before any forest management activities take place in our public forests, we prepare a [forest management plan](#) (plan).

The [forest management planning process](#) takes about 4 years. Throughout the process, there are opportunities for Indigenous communities and the public to get involved.

Each plan provides for the sustainability of the forest and determines:

- the long-term objectives for the forest
- what forest operations will occur during a 10-year period
- the amount that can be harvested
- where and how trees will be harvested
- where roads can be built
- how the forest will be regenerated

Below you can find out [more about the forest management planning process](#).

How to stay informed and get involved

Your participation is a key component of the process. You can participate in the following ways:

- review material and provide comment at 4 points during the planning process when the ministry formally requests input
- make an appointment any time during the development or implementation of a plan
- read an approved plan or an annual report about the plan's implementation
- look at annual work schedules to see when and where operations will occur

Local Indigenous communities may also:

- have a representative on the planning team and local citizens' committee
- work with the ministry to develop a customized approach to consultation
- identify values for protection and help with developing and reviewing related reports
- review and comment on the plan

Find out when things are happening:

- watch for notices in media (newspapers, online news and social media)
- view current notices and plans on the [Natural Resources Information Portal](#)
- look at the [forest management plan renewal schedule](#)

Make an appointment or get help:

- contact your [local ministry office](#) (1-800-667-1940)
- visit the office of a sustainable forest licensee

The next section provides more information about providing input during the planning process.

Providing input during planning process

This section gives an overview of the stages where you can provide input during a forest management planning process. For more detail visit our [Handbook for getting involved in forest management on public lands in Ontario](#).

Get involved and provide your input into the planning process. There are 4 stages of consultation, where we formally request input:

- Stage 1: invitation to participate
- Stage 2: review the proposed management direction
- Stage 3: review the draft plan

- Stage 4: inspect the approved plan

This is your opportunity to get involved in a plan. Public notices will be issued at each stage of consultation. Watch for:

- notices in the media (newspapers, online news, social media) and on the [Natural Resources Information Portal](#).
- direct notices sent to those on the ministry's mailing list (contact your [local ministry office](#) or the ministry general inquiry number at 1-800-667-1940 to get on a mailing list).

Stage 1: invitation to participate

This stage is advising you that we are starting to develop a plan. The planning process begins by updating data about the forest and gathering information from its users.

At the start of the planning process, you can:

- look at the information we have so far
- identify your interests
- share what you know about the forest
- share resource values information
- provide your views on what you want the forest to look like in the future and what benefits you want the forest to provide in the future

For example:

- locations of tourism establishments
- canoe routes
- mining claims
- archaeological sites
- traplines, cabins, trails
- wildlife habitat areas

Providing this information early in the process helps ensure we can consider all values.

During this initial period, the information is available:

- at your [local ministry office](#)

- on the [Natural Resources Information Portal](#)

Stage 2: review the proposed management direction

View and comment on the proposed management direction, for example:

- areas proposed for harvest over 40 years (called the spatial harvest schedule)
- location of access, harvest, renewal and tending operations for 10 years
- planned primary and branch roads (longer-term roads) and operational road boundaries (short-term roads)
- road use management strategies like who can use a road and when, who is responsible for maintaining a road, and if a road will close in the future
- location of values or important ecological features
- operational prescriptions and conditions developed to prevent, minimize or mitigate any negative effects on values or important ecological features

During this 60 day review period:

- an in-person or virtual information forum is offered
- the proposed management direction is available on the [Natural Resources Information Portal](#)

Stage 3: review the draft plan

Review the draft plan and check that your interests and concerns were considered.

During this 60 day review period:

- an in-person or virtual information forum may be offered
- the draft plan is available on the [Natural Resources Information Portal](#)
- a summary of the draft plan is also available to assist you in your review

After review of the draft, the plan author revises the plan and submits it for approval.

Stage 4: inspect the approved plan

Once approved, you can inspect the plan. During the plan's implementation (10 years):

- the approved plan is available on the [Natural Resources Information Portal](#)

- a summary of the approved plan is also available

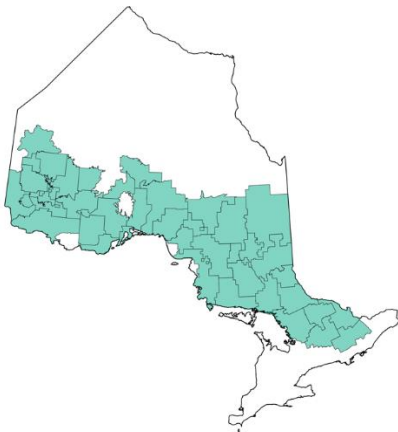
More about the Forest Management Planning process

This section provides an overview of the forest management planning process. For more detail visit our [Handbook for getting involved in forest management on public lands in Ontario](#).

Before any forest management activities can take place, we prepare a [forest management plan](#) (plan) for each [management unit](#) in the province.

Management units are areas of forest that range in size from 300,000 to 3.6 million hectares. They span the province from Kemptville in the southeast to Pikangikum in the northwest (see image below) forming what we call the managed forest (see image below).

Managed forest and management units 2024



The forest management planning process follows a legal and policy framework that provides direction for the sustainable management and use of public forests.

The foundation of the forest policy framework is the [Crown Forest Sustainability Act](#). It requires that each plan have regard for:

- plant and animal life
- water, soil, and air
- social and economic values like recreation and heritage

To achieve this requirement, each plan has a management direction that balances objectives related to forest diversity, socio-economics, forest cover, and silviculture.

A Registered Professional Forester prepares the plan with help from:

- an interdisciplinary planning team
- Indigenous communities and interested members of the public
- a Local Citizens' Committee

Preparing a plan takes about 4 years. Each plan covers 10 years and outlines:

- the long-term objectives for the management unit
- what forest operations will occur

The planning team identifies the desired benefits from the forest and sets objectives to achieve these benefits. Forest management objectives are wide ranging and relate to things such as:

- wood supply for mills
- biodiversity
- forest structure and composition

Then, with help from computer models, they examine alternative scenarios and determine the levels and types of access, harvest, renewal, and tending activities needed to meet these objectives.

The team also determines the planned harvest area, which is the maximum amount that we can sustainably harvest over the 10-years covered by the plan.

The ministry uses a set of [forest management guides](#) to provide direction on acceptable forest management practices.

The ministry approves a plan when satisfied that it provides for the sustainability of the forest. After approval, forest managers put the plan into action by:

- preparing annual work schedules of the operations from the approved plan
- using responsible practices and following standards
- [monitoring and reporting](#) on the plan's implementation

If you would like more information on managing public forests in Ontario and how you can get involved, visit the [forest management planning webpage](#), the [Handbook for getting involved in forest management on public lands in Ontario](#), or contact your [local ministry work centre](#).

