

Handbook for getting involved in forest management in Ontario

Policy Division | Crown Forests and Lands Policy Branch

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How to participate in forest management

Land acknowledgment

We would like to acknowledge the long history of the lands referenced in this document. The forests currently managed by the Ministry of Natural Resources (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.

We recognize that some of the geographic boundaries used in this document may not resonate with all readers. We understand that the borders of Ontario and its management units may not align with some readers' conceptualizations of the landscape's boundaries. Although we use this system to separate the managed forest, we appreciate that it is not the only way the landscape is understood.

As a ministry, we have a responsibility for the sustainable management of the forest, and we recognize the need to work alongside First Nation and Métis partners to achieve this collective goal for our shared lands, for generations to come.

Introduction

This handbook will help you understand how Ontario's Crown forests (also known as public forests) are managed and find information about how to get involved. It is designed for anyone who wants to learn more about their opportunities to participate.

It includes:

- an overview of forest management, the forest management planning process and plan implementation, and participation
- details about how First Nation and Métis communities and members of the public can participate

The information is consistent with the ministry's forest policy framework. However, is not intended to be used to interpret rules relating to forest management planning and operations, nor does it create new policy requirements.

The [Forest Management Planning Manual](#) provides the official direction for all aspects of forest management planning including:

- the approach for working with First Nation and Métis communities to support their involvement in the forest management planning process in a manner that respects Aboriginal and treaty rights, and that assists the Crown in addressing its duty to consult obligations, where triggered
- public consultation

Indigenous communities' unique rights and interests

First Nation and Métis 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.

Overview: forest management

This section provides an overview of:

- forest management and why it's important
- how and where our public forests are managed
- the requirement forest managers must follow
- who is responsible for forest management

Overview: Forest management

Forest management is the use of forestry principles and practices to achieve sustainable benefits from a forest over time. It includes the activities of:

- building and maintaining access roads into the forest
- harvesting trees
- renewal and tending of the forest
- preparing forest management plans that enable these activities

Why forest management is important

To have healthy forests tomorrow, we need to look after them today. Ontario [sustainably manages](#) our public forests to meet present and future needs.

Forests provide environmental, cultural, social and economic benefits such as:

- essential goods and services such as lumber, toilet paper, furniture
- employment and economic development
- wildlife habitat
- overall health and wellbeing

Where we sustainably manage Ontario's public forests

Forest management occurs throughout a large part of central and northern Ontario (see image below). This area is known as the managed forest and is further broken down into areas called management units.

Management units:

- range in size from 300,000 to 3.6 million hectares
- have local names like the Algoma Forest or Red Lake Forest

You can view an [interactive map of management units](#) or visit the [Natural Resources Information Portal](#) to find the current plan for each unit.

The Managed Forest and Management Units 2024

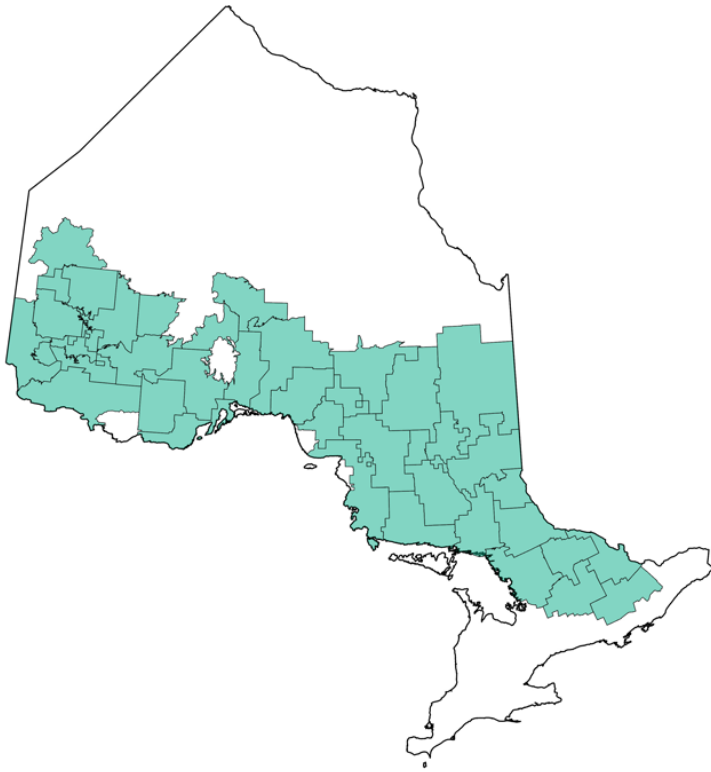


Figure: Managed Forest and the management units in Ontario.

How public forests are managed

Public forests are managed through forest management plans. Forest managers prepare a plan for or each management unit to ensure sustainable management.

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

- long-term objectives for the forest
- planned forest operations during a 10-year period

Learn more in the [forest management planning](#) section.

Although, the ministry is responsible for managing public forests, there is also a role for Indigenous communities and the public. Learn more about getting involved in the [participating in forest management planning](#) section.

The requirements for forest managers

Forest laws and policies

Ontario uses an interconnected system of laws, regulations and policies to sustainably manage its forests. This system is known as the [forest policy framework](#).

It is a robust system, based on:

- up-to-date science and information
- monitoring and continual improvement through adaptive management
- consultation with First Nations, Métis and the public

Adaptive management is a cycle of planning, implementing, monitoring and re-planning to incorporate:

- outcomes and experience
- Indigenous knowledge
- new science and information

The [Crown Forest Sustainability Act](#) is the foundation of the forest policy framework. This law governs the sustainable management of forests. Forest managers must have regard for:

- plant and animal life, including species at risk
- water, soil, air
- social and economic values

Forest manuals and guides

Three manuals provide direction for forest management:

The [Forest Management Planning Manual](#):

- directs all aspects of forest management planning
- guides the preparation of a plan

The [Forest Operations and Silviculture Manual](#):

- sets out principles and accepted approaches for forest management
- establishes standards for forest operations and [silvicultural practices](#)
- specifies minimum qualifications for forestry workers
- details procedures for evaluating forest management in Ontario

The [Forest Information Manual](#):

- provides direction for exchanging forest information between the ministry and the forest industry
- describes the information required for forest management planning, implementation and reporting on forest operations (such as maps, geospatial data layers, forest values, base data, reports)

Additionally, a set of [forest management guides](#) provides direction on acceptable forest management practices.

Forest management responsibilities

Although the ministry is responsible for managing public forests, it works with the forest sector to accomplish this. Ontario's forest sector operates under the requirements of the forest policy framework.

The forest sector follows rigorous processes and standards to:

- protect the environment and biodiversity
- responsibly harvest and renew the forest
- consider how all users value the forest
- involve First Nations, Métis and the public

Forest companies manage most of Ontario's public forests under 20-year [Sustainable Forest Licences](#). They prepare [forest management plans](#) and conduct operations like harvesting and renewal.

Several types of companies can hold Sustainable Forest Licences, for example:

- multi-party companies with more than two interests (such as community, Indigenous, and/or forest industry) who govern the company together, such as on a board of directors
- single-entity companies with a single business interest, often a forest sector company or an Indigenous company
- government agencies that are corporations established by the government

If no Sustainable Forest Licence is in place, the ministry manages the forest. The ministry issues licences or contracts as needed to handle forest management responsibilities.

Overview: forest management planning

This section provides an overview of:

- why we need forest management plans
- the general process, who prepares a plan and how long it takes
- the role of the local citizens' committee
- how a plan is put into action

The purpose of a forest management plan

We use [Forest management plans](#) (plan) to manage public forests. Before any activities can take place, forest managers prepare a plan for each [management unit](#) in the province. This ensures our forests are sustainably managed.

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 determines:

- long-term objectives for the forest
- forest operations 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 planning process. Learn how you can get involved in the sections on [public involvement](#) and [First Nation and Métis community involvement](#).

Preparing a forest management plan

The person who prepares a plan is called the plan author. They must be a Registered Professional Forester in Ontario under the [Professional Foresters Act](#).

The plan author prepares the plan with help from:

- an interdisciplinary planning team
- Indigenous communities
- 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
- planned forest operations during the 10-year period

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

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

Then, with the help of 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 approves a plan when satisfied that it provides for the sustainability of the forest.

The role of the local citizens' committee

The local citizens' committee represents a range and balance of interests. Membership typically includes local citizens with an interest in forest management, such as:

- First Nation and Métis people
- trappers
- tourism operators
- hunters and anglers
- naturalists
- other interest groups
- the general public

The committee provides advice to the ministry and assists the plan author and planning team while they develop and implement the plan.

You do not need to be a member of a local citizens committee to provide input on a plan. At any time during the planning process, you can:

- request a meeting with a member of the committee to discuss the plan or get assistance

Implementing a forest management plan

After approval, forest managers implement the plan over a 10-year period by:

- preparing an annual work schedule of the approved operations
- using responsible practices and following standards
- monitoring and reporting on the plan's implementation in annual reports

Since a plan covers 10 years, unexpected things may come up that require:

- changes to the current plan
- additional action and planning (such as managing pests or responding to wildland fire)

In these cases, forest manager may need to do additional planning such as:

- changing the approved plan through a [plan amendment](#)
- requesting a [plan extension](#) if approved operations are not complete
- creating a [contingency plan](#) if the new plan is delayed
- developing a [prescribed burn plan](#) if fire will be used for forest management
- preparing a [herbicide project](#) plan if herbicides will be applied
- establishing an [insect pest management program](#) if pest control is needed

For more information about [annual work schedules](#), [reporting](#) and the various types of additional planning refer to the next sections.

Learn how you can participate in [public involvement: implementing the plan](#) or [First Nation and Métis community involvement: implementing the plan](#) sections.

Annual work schedule

Forest managers use [annual work schedules](#) to implement the approved plan. Each year they prepare a new schedule to cover a portion of the plan's 10-years of operations. They normally cover operations from April 1 to March 31 of the following year.

These activities can only occur once an approved plan and an annual work schedule are in place:

- harvesting trees for lumber, paper or other products
- planting trees and seeding to renew the forest
- tending young trees to ensure healthy growth
- building and maintaining roads to access the forest
- decommissioning roads when no longer needed
- constructing or removing water crossings
- creating access controls (such as gates, berms, signage)
- using aggregates and creating wood storage yards

Contingency plans

A contingency plan is an interim plan that allows operations to continue between the expiry of the current plan and the approval of the next one. There are 2 types of contingency plans:

- short-term (up to 1 year)
- long-term (1 to 3 years)

Contingency plans are needed when there is:

- a delay in preparing or approving the next 10-year plan
- a proposal to combine management units
- a need to address unexpected events (such as a major forest fire)

Plan extensions

A plan extension adds time to the current plan if approved operations remain available. An extension does not change the approved operations.

There are 3 types of plan extensions:

- short-term (up to 3 months)
- medium-term (up to 1 year)
- long-term (more than 1 year)

Plan amendments

Any changes to the approved plan are made using an amendment. For example, amendments can be used to:

- change the location of harvest operations
- deal with an unexpected events (such as a major forest fire)
- address changes in legislation and policy

There are 3 types of amendments:

- administrative
- minor
- major

The ministry district manager, in consultation with the local citizens' committee and the plan author, categorizes each amendment depending on whether the change is small or significant.

Anyone can propose an amendment by:

- submitting a written request to the ministry district manager

The ministry regional director may also require an amendment if:

- continuing to implement the plan would no longer ensure the sustainability of the forest

Prescribed burn plan

A prescribed burn is when fire is applied in a controlled way to help manage the forest. Prescribed burning is a safe and effective forest management tool that we may use to:

- clear areas to prepare for planting
- remove undesirable plants competing with desired species for nutrients
- remove undergrowth so sunlight can reach the forest floor for tree growth
- reduce forest fuels to reduce potential wildland fire risk
- control insect pests and diseases
- make nutrients more readily available to the ecosystem

Prescribed burn plans ensure safe and effective burns and must meet the requirements in the [Prescribed Burn Manual](#). Forest managers prepare one annually if needed. Once approved, it becomes part of the annual work schedule.

A brief history of cultural burning:

The ministry recognizes that Indigenous peoples have used fire to care for the landscape since time immemorial.

Cultural burning holds different meanings for communities but can often include objectives such as:

- fuel mitigation
- pest management
- plant revitalization
- habitat enhancement
- maintenance of open travel corridors

The practice was diminished by past fire suppression strategies that discouraged or banned intentional burning. However, it remains a tradition and land management tool for some Indigenous communities.

Recently, cultural burns have contributed to the preservation of language and culture in some communities by creating an opportunity for community members to share knowledge on fire use and fire safety among generations.

Aerial herbicide and insecticide project plans

Forest managers prepare aerial herbicide or insecticide plans annually if needed, before applying any herbicides or insecticides by aircraft. Once approved, they become part of the annual work schedule.

Herbicide applications can:

- control vegetation that competes with conifer tree growth after harvesting
- ensure the future forest will include conifers, hardwoods, and mixedwoods, which is important for maintaining Ontario's biodiversity

Insecticide applications can:

- reduce the impact of forest insects such as the spruce or jack pine budworm
- maintain wood supply
- decrease risk of fire
- preserve wildlife habitat
- protect investments in forest management
- preserve social and cultural values

Insect pest management programs

The ministry monitors insect infestations annually. If a major insect infestation occurs, we may need an insect management program.

The ministry considers an insect infestation to be major if it:

- affects large areas (multiple management units)
- has affected an area in the past
- is of provincial significance

We must treat these infestations quickly to control their spread. An insect pest management program plans the types and locations of operations needed to control a pest.

A team prepares the program and includes representatives from:

- the ministry
- First Nation and Métis communities
- the forest industry
- the local citizens' committee

The pest management program will:

- identify areas that need treatment

- outline treatment options

The options for treatment may be:

- no treatment
- changing planned harvest through a forest management plan amendment (to target the insect's habitat)
- salvage harvest
- prescribed burns
- aerial spraying of insecticide through an insecticide project plan
- other controls (such as bait traps)

Reporting on forest operations

Forest managers report each year on the activities conducted in a management unit. The annual reports for every management unit are available on the [Natural Resources Information Portal](#).

The ministry also summarizes the management unit annual report information into annual statistics on forest management for the province including:

- an overview of [forest management facts and figures](#)
- detailed data and interactive charts in [Ontario's Forest Facts](#)
- open datasets on the [Ontario Data Catalogue](#)

Every 5 years, the ministry also releases a report that provides an overview of the [state of Ontario's forests](#). It presents indicators that help us monitor the well-being of the province's forests, communities and forest industry.

Overview: participating in forest management planning

This section provides an overview of:

- Why you should consider participating
- When and how you can get involved
- How First Nation and Métis communities can participate
- The issue resolution process

Why get involved

By participating in forest management planning you contribute to making informed and balanced decisions.

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

Forest managers want to hear from:

- First Nation and Métis communities and organizations
- local forest users
- the public

The ministry and the planning team consider all comments received during the planning process.

When to get involved

Forest managers must follow a formal consultation process that is designed to get you involved during forest management planning. As part of the consultation process, the ministry seeks your input at 4 key stages of preparing a forest management plan:

- [Stage 1: invitation to participate](#)
- [Stage 2: review of the proposed management direction](#)
- [Stage 3: review of the draft forest management plan](#)
- [Stage 4: inspection of the ministry approved forest management plan](#)

Learn more in the [public involvement: 4 stages of planning](#) section.

How to get involved

The ministry will notify you at each stage by:

- sending an email or letter to anyone interested in or affected by the forest's management
- posting a notice in newspapers, online news, social media and on the [Natural Resources Information Portal](#)

The notices will provide the details you need to participate such as:

- management unit involved
- stage of consultation and the type of input needed
- location of relevant information
- time and place of any information forum (if offered)
- the date for providing your input
- contact information for the ministry, [plan author](#), [local citizens' committee](#) or the sustainable forest licence holder

To stay informed and participate during this process you can:

- watch for the ministry's notices seeking input on a plan
- attend information forums to learn about the plan and provide your input
- review information on the [Natural Resources Information Portal](#), at the [local ministry office](#) or the office of the sustainable forest licence holder
- send your input (email or letter) to the plan author or the ministry
- ask questions using the contact information in public notices
- get on a mailing list or seek membership on a local citizens' committee by contacting your [local ministry office](#) or the general inquiry number at 1-800-667-1940

First Nation and Métis community participation

First Nation and Métis community members are welcome to join in any of these public consultation processes. However, the ministry also offers opportunities specifically designed to support participation from First Nation and Métis communities. This includes:

- standard consultation: this is like the regular public consultation process but includes more notices and offers additional information forums
- customized consultation: this is an approach developed together with the community, plan author and the ministry to support the communities' specific needs

Community members can:

- provide input directly to the ministry, planning team and plan author
- contact your local First Nation or Métis government for direction from your leadership on how to provide input on behalf of your community

Learn more in the [First Nation and Métis community involvement: during planning](#) section.

Issue resolution for unresolved concerns

Plan authors and planning teams consider the input they receive and try to address concerns when preparing:

- a plan
- a plan amendment (minor, or major)
- a contingency plan (longer term)
- an insect pest management program

During formal consultation, if your concern is not addressed to your satisfaction, you may:

- request a formal issue resolution process

How to request issue resolution

You must submit your request in writing to the district manager at the [local ministry office](#) and be sure it includes:

- your issue(s)
- if your issue(s) relates to the strategic direction or proposed operations of the plan, including the location of concern
- facts or evidence to support your issue(s)
- a proposed solution

Upon receipt of your request, the ministry will:

- review it to ensure it is within the scope of the plan's issue resolution process

How your issue is resolved

Once your request is reviewed, the ministry may:

- invite you to a meeting (such as a conference call, video call or face-to-face) to discuss and resolve your issue(s)
- notify you that your issue is out of scope of the issue resolution process

If you are invited to an issue resolution meeting:

- the ministry district manager or regional director will attend

If the meeting does not resolve your issue:

- the ministry district manager or regional director will provide a written decision

Who provides the decision, depends on the stage of planning process:

- the district manager attends the meeting and decides for requests up to the end of the 60-day review period for the draft plan
- the regional director attends the meeting and decides for requests that arrive within 15 days after the 60-day review period for the draft plan ends or if you request a review of the district manager's decision

Public involvement: 4 stages of planning

This section provides details on:

- the various stages where you can provide input during the forest management planning process

Preparing a [forest management plan](#) takes about 4 years. Forest managers must follow a formal consultation process designed to inform and involve you. The ministry seeks your input at 4 key stages during the planning process.

Stage 1: Invitation to participate

The purpose of stage 1 is to advise you that a plan is starting.

Planning begins with updating information about the forest. As the process moves forward, the planning team considers this information when developing the management direction for the forest. At this stage, your input:

- helps the planning team understand more about the forest and its uses

The ministry will:

- issue a notice seeking input (learn more about notices in the [how to get involved](#) section)

At this stage you can:

- view the background information at your [local ministry office](#), on the [Natural Resources Information Portal](#) and at the office of the sustainable forest licence holder
- contact the plan author, members of the planning team, local citizens' committee or your [local ministry office](#) to discuss the plan

You may be interested in:

- looking at the information gathered so far
- identifying your interests
- sharing what you know about the forest
- sharing information about values or important ecological features
- providing views on what you want the forest to look like and what benefits you want the forest to provide in the future

For example, values might include locations of:

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

For example, benefits might include:

- providing wood to mills
- habitat for fish and wildlife
- opportunities for cultural activities
- recreation and tourism

Stage 2: Review of the Proposed Management Direction

The purpose of stage 2 is to ask you to review the proposed management direction.

The management direction is the backbone of the plan. At this stage, your input:

- helps the planning team refine the management direction before the ministry endorses it

The ministry will:

- issue a notice seeking input on the proposed management direction (learn more about notices in [how to get involved](#) section)
- invite you to an information forum
- provide 60 days for you to review and comment

At this stage you can:

- attend the information forum and talk to the plan author, members of the planning team and the local citizens' committee

- view the proposed management direction at your [local ministry office](#), on the [Natural Resources Information Portal](#) and at the office of the sustainable forest licence holder
- contact the plan author, members of the planning team, local citizens' committee or your [local ministry office](#) to discuss the proposed management direction

You may be interested in reviewing and commenting on:

- the objectives for the plan and how they will be measured
- 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 future intent for the road
- 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

You can also review a summary of:

- comments received on the plan and responses provided
- results of the desired forest and benefits meeting held between First Nation and Métis communities, the planning team and the local citizens committee
- the local citizens' committee activities to date

Once the regional director endorses the management direction, the plan author prepares the draft plan.

Stage 3: Review of Draft Forest Management Plan

The purpose of stage 3 is to ask you to review the draft plan. At this stage, your feedback:

- helps the planning team make any final changes to the plan before the ministry approves it

The ministry will:

- issue a notice seeking input on the draft plan (learn more about notices in the [how to get involved](#) section)
- invite you to an information forum (if one is held)

- provide 60 days for you to review and comment

If there are no concerns with the preparation of the plan to date, an information forum might not be needed at this stage.

At this stage you can:

- attend the information forum (if held) and talk with the plan author, members of the planning team and the local citizens' committee
- view the draft plan at your [local ministry office](#), on the [Natural Resources Information Portal](#) and at the office of the sustainable forest licence holder
- contact the plan author, members of the planning team, local citizens' committee or your [local ministry office](#) to discuss the draft plan

You may be interested in reviewing and providing input on:

- the proposed locations of harvest, renewal, and tending operations
- the proposed locations of roads
- locations where aggregates may be extracted
- the use management strategies for proposed roads
- the location of values or important ecological features
- cultural values
- how impacts to values or important ecological features will be prevented, minimized, or mitigated during forest operations
- whether you have information relating to values and important ecological features that could be affected by forest operations
- how your interests have been considered

Stage 4: Inspect the ministry Approved Forest Management Plan

The purpose of stage 4 is to invite you to look at the approved plan.

The ministry will:

- issue a notice to inform you that the plan is approved (learn more about notices in the [how to get involved](#) section)

At this stage you can:

- view the approved plan and a plan summary at your [local ministry office](#), on the [Natural Resources Information Portal](#) and at the office of the sustainable forest licence holder (it is available for the 10-year duration of the plan)

- contact the plan author, members of the planning team, local citizens' committee or your [local ministry office](#) to discuss the approved plan

Public involvement: implementing the plan

This section provides details on:

- how you can participate in a plan's implementation

Activities to implement the plan

After approval, forest managers implement the plan over a 10-year period by:

- preparing an [annual work schedule](#) of the approved operations

Since a plan covers 10 years, forest manager may need to:

- change the approved plan as needed through a [plan amendment](#)

Your participation is also important during plan implementation. How you can get involved will vary depending on:

- the consultation that has already occurred
- and if there are any significant changes to the approved plan

Learn more about these activities in the [implementing a forest management plan](#) section and about how you can participate in the following sections.

Involvement in an annual work schedule

Each year forest managers prepare an annual work schedule to implement a portion of the plan's 10-years of operations.

- learn more in the [annual work schedule](#) section

Annual work schedules do not require consultation, since:

- it simply selects operations from the plan that the ministry already approved
- the ministry gathered input and feedback on these operations while preparing the forest management plan

However, at least 15 days before operations begin, the ministry will:

- issue a notice to let you know that the annual work schedule is final (learn more about notices in the [how to get involved](#) section)

You can:

- view the approved annual work schedule available on the [Natural Resources Information Portal](#) and at the office of the sustainable forest licence holder for its duration
- contact the [local ministry office](#) to discuss the annual work schedule

Involvement in plan amendments

Any changes to the approved plan are made using a plan amendment.

- learn more in the [plan amendment](#) section

Administrative amendments:

- do not require consultation since the changes to the plan are simple with limited impact to operations.

Minor and major amendments:

- require additional planning and consultation

For these, the ministry will:

- issue a notice seeking input (learn more about notices in the [how to get involved](#) section)

You can:

- provide your comments by the date in the notices
- view the approved amendment on the [Natural Resources Information Portal](#) or at the office of the sustainable forest licence holder
- contact the [local ministry office](#) to discuss the approved amendment

Involvement in plan extensions

A plan extension adds time to the current plan if approved operations remain available. An extension does not change the approved operations.

- learn more in the [plan extension](#) section

Short-term extensions:

- do not require consultation since they are for a brief period

Medium-term and long-term extensions:

- require consultation

For these, the ministry will:

- issue a notice seeking input (learn more about notices in the [how to get involved](#) section)
- provide 15 days for your review input

You can provide input on:

- existing agreements you may have with the forest manager regarding the completion of operations
- the location of forest operations during the plan extension
- values and ecological features that could be affected by forest operations

You can also:

- view the approved plan extension on the [Natural Resources Information Portal](#) and at the office of the sustainable forest licence holder
- contact your [local ministry office](#) to discuss the approved plan extension

Involvement in contingency plans

A contingency plan is an interim plan allowing operations to continue between the expiry of the current plan and the approval of the next one.

- learn more in the [contingency plan](#) section

Short-term contingency plans:

- do not require consultation since they contain operations that are not contentious (had no issues or issues were resolved)
- the ministry gathered input and feedback on these operations while preparing the current forest management plan

Longer-term contingency plans

- require a minimum of one consultation opportunity
- consultation details will be described in the contingency plan proposal (the ministry considers the amount of consultation that already occurred on the plan and proposed operations)

For these, the ministry will:

- issue a notice seeking input (learn more about notices in the [how to get involved](#) section)

You can:

- view the contingency plan on the [Natural Resources Information Portal](#) and at the office of the sustainable forest licence holder
- contact your [local ministry office](#) to discuss the approved contingency plan

Involvement in prescribed burn plans

When using fire to help manage the forest, forest managers prepare a prescribed burn plan to ensure safe and effective burns.

- learn more in the [prescribed burn plan](#) section

At least 30 days before the anticipated date of the burn, the ministry will:

- issue a notice to let you know that the prescribed burn plan is available for inspection (learn more about notices in the [how to get involved](#) section)

At least 14 days before operations are scheduled to begin, the ministry will:

- post signs at main roads that lead to the area indicating when the burn is to occur and who you can contact if you have questions

You can:

- contact the people listed in the notice/sign if you have questions
- view the approved prescribed burn plan on the [Natural Resources Information Portal](#) or at the office of the sustainable forest licence holder
- contact the [local ministry office](#) to discuss the approved plan

Involvement in aerial herbicide or insecticide plans

Forest managers prepare aerial herbicide or insecticide project plans annually, if needed, before applying any herbicides or insecticides by aircraft.

- learn more in the [aerial herbicide project](#) plan section

At least 30 days before the anticipated date the operation, the ministry will:

- send a notice to anyone who has expressed an interest in aerial herbicide or insecticide project plans on the management unit, or anyone who lives or owns land within 500 metres of the operation

- issue a notice to let you know about the operation (learn more about notices in the [how to get involved](#) section)

Seven days before the operation is scheduled to begin, the forest manager will:

- post signs in areas where any applications are planned

You can:

- contact the people listed in the notice/sign if you have questions
- view the approved project plan on the [Natural Resources Information Portal](#) and at the office of the sustainable forest licence holder
- contact your [local ministry office](#) to discuss the approved project plans

Involvement in insect pest management programs

The ministry monitors insect infestations annually. If a major insect infestation occurs, we may need an insect management program.

- learn more in the [insect pest management program](#) section

The ministry wants to hear your input about the proposed insect pest management program and any potential proposals for specific aerial insecticide projects.

The ministry will:

- send a notice to anyone who has expressed an interest in insect pest management programs (learn more about notices in the [how to get involved](#) section)
- invite you to an information forum
- provide 15 days for your review and input

This is your opportunity to review provide input on:

- infestation maps and population forecasts
- areas eligible for insect pest management
- values information for the area
- the evaluation of management options
- the selected course of action
- draft proposals for the aerial insecticide project and associated maps

You can:

- view the approved insect pest management program on the [Natural Resources Information Portal](#) or at your [local ministry office](#)

- contact your [local ministry office](#) to discuss the insect pest management program
- request [issue resolution](#) with the ministry regional director

First Nation and Métis community involvement: during planning

This section provides details on:

- the consultation processes that communities may choose
- identifying and protecting values
- how communities are identified for forest management planning
- specifics about the Whitefeather Forest

Options for community involvement

Input from First Nation and Métis communities is an important part of forest management planning.

Community members are welcome to join in any of the public consultation processes. The ministry also offers opportunities specifically designed to support participation from First Nation and Métis communities.

These opportunities include:

- [standard consultation](#): this is like the regular public consultation process but includes more notices and offers additional information forums
- [customized consultation](#): this is an approach developed together with the community, plan author and the ministry to support the communities' specific needs

Learn more about these consultation options in the next sections.

These consultation opportunities are intended to provide for the consideration of rights, interests, and traditional uses in the forest. Learn if your community should be provided with these opportunities in the [which communities are contacted](#) section.

Before the planning process starts

At least 9 months before planning starts, the ministry district manager will:

- contact your community with information about the opportunities for participating in the upcoming forest management planning process

- invite your community's leadership to identify representatives to join the forest management planning team and the local citizens' committee

Each community may choose to:

- have a representative on the planning team and local citizens' committee
- work with the ministry to develop a customized approach to consultation

Representatives on the planning team and the local citizens' committee will have the opportunity to:

- share information about the planning process with their communities and to represent their communities

Customized consultation for First Nation and Métis communities

Your community's leadership will be:

- invited to develop a customized consultation approach for consulting with your community

The customized consultation approach:

- is optional
- can be developed any time during planning or implementing a plan
- is developed by your community, the plan author and the ministry
- must be agreed to by the community and the ministry
- describes how the community wants to be involved in preparing and implementing the forest management plan

Your community can still participate through the standard consultation process if it doesn't proceed with a customized consultation approach, or if one is not agreed upon (see [standard consultation](#) section below).

The customized consultation approach can include things like how the community will:

- be notified during the preparation of the plan
- get information to support review and input
- identify and provide values information
- be involved in developing prescriptions to protect those values
- be involved in the planning of operations

The customized consultation approach may also address other activities needed to implement the plan such as:

- [annual work schedules](#)
- [plan amendment](#)
- [plan extension](#)
- [contingency plan](#)
- [prescribed burn plan](#)
- [herbicide and insecticide aerial spraying](#)
- [insect pest management program](#)

Learn more about these activities in [implementing a forest management plan](#) section and about participating in the [community involvement: implementing the plan](#) section.

Standard consultation for First Nation and Métis communities

If your community chooses not to develop a customized consultation approach, it will be consulted through the standard process for First Nation and Métis communities.

This process:

- provides the same opportunities as public consultation but includes more notices and offers additional information forums

At each stage of the planning process, the ministry will:

- send a notice to your community
- place a notice in local Indigenous media where available
- post notices in media (such as newspapers, online news and social media) and on the [Natural Resources Information Portal](#)

Under the standard approach to consultation, in addition to the [public consultation opportunities](#), your community can:

- request a community information forum whenever a public one is scheduled
- identify First Nation or Métis values
- participate in preparing a First Nation and Métis Background Information Report
- participate in the desired forest and benefits meeting
- attend a presentation on the proposed management direction

- participate in the planning of forest operations to address identified values
- request information forums to review proposed operations and the draft plan

Identifying values for protecting values

Your community can work with the ministry to prepare reports about its values and how to protect them. These reports include:

- a First Nation and Métis Background Information Report
- a Report on Protection of Identified First Nation and Métis Values

The ministry will seek the community's consent on making these reports available to the public.

The First Nation and Métis Background Information Report

The purpose of this report is to document your community's values and Indigenous knowledge. This report summarizes your community's:

- use of natural resources on the management unit for domestic purposes (such as hunting, fishing, trapping, harvesting of wood and gathering)
- concerns related to forest management
- involvement in the preparation of the report
- values on a First Nation and Métis values map

The Report on the Protection of Identified First Nation and Métis Values

This report shows how the values (in the First Nation and Métis Background Information Report) are addressed in operational plans. This report summarizes and discusses:

- proposed areas where harvest, renewal and tending
- proposed road locations of interest to your community
- the current values map(s) and the First Nation and Métis values map
- proposed operational prescriptions for areas of concern associated with your community's values
- how your community's values will be protected
- your community contact person and the ministry contact person

Which communities are contacted

For forest management planning, a First Nation community means:

- a First Nation community that is in or adjacent to the management unit as determined by the ministry district manager

A Métis community means:

- a Métis community that is in or adjacent to the management unit as determined by the ministry district manager

When determining if a community is in or adjacent to a management unit, the ministry district manager considers whether the community has:

- Aboriginal or treaty rights that may be adversely impacted by forest operations in the management unit
- traditional uses that may be affected by forest operations in the management unit
- a local governance body or reserve in or near the management unit
- expressed interest in forest management planning or forest operations specific to the management unit

This will be based on:

- available information for each community that the ministry understands as having Aboriginal or treaty rights and that is located in Ontario
- information that may have been provided to the ministry from First Nation or Métis communities

The Whitefeather Forest

For the Whitefeather Forest, in addition to representation on the planning team and the Local Citizens Committee, Pikangikum First Nation elders will play a guiding role in forest management planning (also known as the Whitefeather Steering Group).

This may include:

- providing advice
- communicating with Pikangikum community members
- building community consensus
- participating on a steering group which will communicate with the planning team

Community elders, trappers, and other members can also be involved in monitoring forest operations.

First Nation and Métis community involvement: implementing the plan

This section provides details on:

- how your community can participate during a plan's implementation

Activities to implement the plan

After approval, forest managers implement the plan over a 10-year period by:

- preparing an [annual work schedule](#) of the approved operations

Since a plan covers 10 years, forest manager may need to:

- change the approved plan as needed through a [plan amendment](#)

Learn more about these activities in the [implementing a forest management plan](#) section.

Your participation is also important during plan implementation.

Customized consultation applies to plan implementation

During forest management planning your community may have chosen to:

- use standard consultation
- develop a customized consultation approach

If your community developed a customized consultation approach, it may also apply to your involvement in:

- annual work schedules
- contingency plans
- plan amendments
- plan extensions
- prescribed burns
- aerial herbicide plans
- insecticide project plans
- insect pest management programs

If your community uses the standard consultation approach, the provisions for public consultation will apply along with any community-specific modifications developed.

Community involvement in annual work schedules

Each year forest managers prepare an annual work schedule to implement a portion of the plan's 10-years of operations.

- learn more in the [annual work schedule](#) section

Your community can review, share thoughts and comment on the annual work schedule.

The forest manager will:

- provide a copy of the draft annual work schedule
- invite you to participate in a meeting to discuss the annual work schedule
- provide 60 days for you to review and comment

During this review period you can:

- review the operations
- update or identify new values that may be affected by operations

If your community identifies new values, then they can also:

- review and comment on the summary of how the sustainable forest licence holder considered First Nation and Métis comments and any new values

Community involvement in plan amendments

Any changes to the approved plan are made using a plan amendment.

- learn more in the [plan amendment](#) section

If a proposed amendment might impact established or asserted Aboriginal or treaty rights, First Nation and Métis communities will have an opportunity to review and comment on the amendment.

For amendments the ministry will:

- provide the proposed amendment to your community
- advise you of the date to complete your review
- provide for a review and comment on updates to the Report on Protection of Identified First Nation and Métis Values, if necessary
- provide the opportunity for an information forum for major amendments

The ministry considers your comments to determine if further consultation or changes to the amendment are needed.

Community involvement in plan extensions

A plan extension adds time to the current plan if approved operations remain available. An extension does not change the approved operations.

- learn more in the [plan extension](#) section

For medium and long term plan extensions, your community can:

- review and comment on the extension as identified in the extension request or proposal
- if the extension request or proposal includes an opportunity for an information forum the District Manager will contact your community to determine if there is interest in having an information forum

The ministry considers your comments when deciding whether the plan extension should proceed.

Community involvement in contingency plans

A contingency plan is an interim plan allowing operations to continue between the expiry of the current plan and the approval of the next one.

- learn more in the [contingency plan](#) section

If your community agreed to a customized consultation approach that includes contingency plans, that approach will be implemented.

- for details see the [customized consultation for First Nation and Métis communities](#) section

If your community is not using a customized consultation approach, it can still participate through the standard consultation process.

- for details see the [standard consultation for First Nation and Métis communities](#) section

Community involvement in prescribed burn plans and aerial herbicide/insecticide spray plans

When using fire to help manage the forest, forest managers prepare a prescribed burn plan to ensure safe and effective burns.

- learn more in the [prescribed burn plan](#) section

Forest managers prepare aerial herbicide or insecticide project plans annually, if needed, before applying any herbicides or insecticides by aircraft.

- learn more in the [aerial herbicide project](#) plan section

If your community agreed to a customized consultation approach that includes prescribed burn or aerial herbicide/insecticide spray plans, that approach will be implemented.

- for details see the [customized consultation for First Nation and Métis communities](#) section

If your community is not using a customized consultation approach, it can still participate through the standard consultation process.

- for details see the [standard consultation process for First Nation and Métis communities](#) section

At least 30 days before the anticipated date the operations, the ministry will:

- notify and invite your community to participate in developing these plans
- provide maps to your community of any prescribed burns or aerial herbicide and insecticide spraying projects with sufficient detail to allow for identification of individual treatment areas

Community involvement in insect management programs

The ministry monitors insect infestations annually. If a major insect infestation occurs, we may need an insect management program.

- learn more in the [insect pest management program](#) section

The ministry will invite your community to participate when preparing an insect pest management program.

Your community can:

- participate on the planning team
- review and comment the aerial insecticide project plan
- request an information forum