



# BC *Forest* Facts

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## MANAGING THE BOREAL FOREST IN B.C.

»»» The boreal region encircles the upper portion of the northern hemisphere and contains one third of the world's forests. The forests in the boreal region are important to the countries where they are found, and globally. They provide habitat for hundreds of wildlife species and they support forest economies in jurisdictions such as Russia, Canada, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Alaska.

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one per cent  
of the world's  
boreal region.*

In Canada, the boreal covers more than 500 million hectares (about 1.25 billion acres), and much of it remains untouched. British Columbia accounts for about two per cent of this area, or less than one per cent of the world's boreal region. Despite this, boreal forests are an important part of B.C.'s diverse and complex ecosystem network.

### B.C.'S BOREAL REGION

As is the case worldwide, B.C.'s boreal region experiences four distinct seasons, with long, cold winters and long days of sunshine during its short, warm summers. Hardwoods such as trembling aspen and black cottonwood and softwoods such as spruces and lodgepole pine thrive in B.C.'s boreal region.

The forests, grasslands, wetlands and rivers found in B.C.'s boreal region

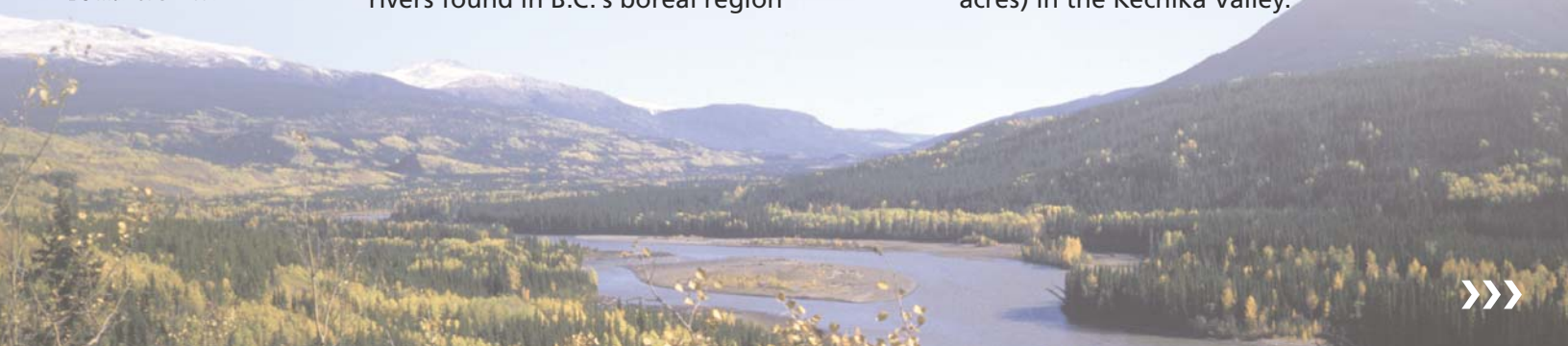


provide habitat for a vast array of wildlife, including waterfowl and other birds that migrate north to nest in the summer. The boreal is also home to moose, caribou, elk, stone sheep, mountain goats, black bear, grizzly bear and grey wolves.

The boreal forest in B.C. is shaped by natural disturbances, including huge wildfires that are driven by winds across the flat, rolling terrain on a regular basis. This high rate of natural disturbance results in forests that are of many different ages, and are generally younger than those in B.C.'s other forest regions. The largest recorded wildfire in B.C. was the 1958 Kech fire, which burned 225,920 hectares (560,000 acres) in the Kechika Valley.



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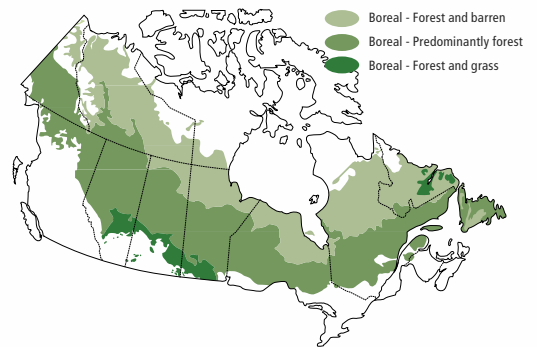
## B.C.'s Boreal Region



World's Boreal Region



Canada's Boreal Region



### WHERE IS B.C.'S BOREAL FOREST?

B.C.'s Biogeoclimatic Ecosystem Classification (BEC) system provides a common reference point so resource managers can support the needs of the province's unique ecosystems. There are 14 broad BEC zones, each based on characteristic climate, soils and vegetation.

B.C.'s boreal forest is found in the BEC Boreal White and Black Spruce zone, which covers 15.7 million hectares (38.8 million acres) and comprises mostly mixed trembling aspen-white

spruce and lodgepole pine-black spruce forest, primarily in the far northeast. This zone makes up about 15 per cent of B.C.'s land base.

The Sub-Boreal Pine - Spruce and Sub-Boreal Spruce BEC zones, both in the central Interior and closer to the Pacific Coast, have boreal characteristics but are not considered true boreal forest, mostly because of less seasonal variation in temperature and, in many areas, moister precipitation regimes.

## RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN THE BOREAL



As a result of B.C.'s comprehensive, community-based land use planning, the boreal region accommodates and protects wildlife and environmental values while allowing opportunities for responsible resource use, including forestry, oil and gas development, tourism and agriculture. For example, the region's primary resource industries, forestry and oil and gas, plan activities together where possible to minimize road duplication.



In north central B.C. where the boreal plains and muskeg in the east meet the Northern Rocky Mountains, the Muskwa-Kechika management area covers 6.3 million hectares (15.6 million acres) of wilderness and is home to the greatest combined abundance and diversity of large wild mammals in North America. About one-quarter of the Muskwa-Kechika is in parks and protected areas, and three quarters is in special management zones that are managed to ensure wildlife and wilderness values are maintained as a priority.



Provincial parks in B.C.'s boreal include Milligan Hills near the Alberta border, which protects provincially and regionally significant forest and grassland habitat for an endangered population of Woodland caribou that migrate from neighbouring Alberta.

In addition to protected areas, the region has large special management areas with plans that offer more refined guidelines to meet local needs. For example, the Dunlevy Creek special management zone sets out designated corridors that control access, protecting habitat for large mammals such as caribou, elk and stone sheep, and maintaining wilderness recreation opportunities.



B.C. is developing treaty-related measures with First Nations on land use, commercial recreation and tourism, and interim measures for forestry, oil and gas, and mining. In the boreal region, the Kaska Nation



have been working with the Ministry of Forests on forest management and planning in their claimed traditional territory through a forestry council.

### THE CANADIAN BOREAL INITIATIVE

The Canadian Boreal Initiative is an independent organization that works directly with a wide range of industry, First Nations, conservation organizations and other interested parties to link science, policy and conservation activities in Canada's boreal forest. The Forest Products Association of Canada, the national public policy voice for Canada's forest products industry, has committed \$1 million and resources in kind over five years to further boreal ecosystem conservation in partnership with the Canadian Boreal Initiative. Projects include research involving Ducks Unlimited Canada to improve forest management practices around water and wetlands and co-operation with the World Wildlife Fund Canada related to its high conservation value forests initiative.





## »»» FORESTRY IN THE BOREAL REGION



Throughout B.C., forest activities on public lands meet the high standards demanded by customers, communities and provincial laws. A recent independent study found that B.C.'s forest policy regulations are among the most stringent in the world.

A large proportion of B.C.'s boreal forest is managed according to sustainable forest management plans that are verified by third-party forest management certification processes. Many area licensees have selected the Canadian Standards Association sustainable forest management certification standard, which is recognized as having comprehensive requirements for public involvement.

Clearcutting with reserves, which remains the most common harvesting method in the boreal forest, is best suited to the area's ecology. The results are not unlike those of natural disturbances such as wildfire, leading to harvested areas of different sizes and shapes with reserves of trees left behind to provide wildlife habitat and protect waterways and other features.

Harvesting in the boreal usually takes place during the winter when the ground is frozen, often on temporary ice roads. When harvesting is completed, forest companies plant white spruce and lodgepole pine seedlings. Some tree species, such as trembling aspen, come back quickly naturally.

B.C.'s boreal forest supports an integrated forest industry that makes the best use of the resource. Wood panels such as veneer and oriented strand board are produced from both hardwoods and softwoods, and wood waste or trees that cannot be used for higher-value products are used to produce pulp and paper.



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### **For more information:**

The BC Market Outreach Network delivers facts about B.C.'s sustainable forest management on behalf of B.C.'s government, industry and communities. Visit our website at [www.bcforestinformation.com](http://www.bcforestinformation.com) to learn more about B.C. forests and how the province has become a world leader in forest management.

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