



Forest Futures: Scenario Analysis for the Canadian Forested Landscape

Canadian forests and the economy and society that they support are at risk. Globalization, climate change, industry consolidation, threatened species, expanding development and preservation campaigns present Canadians with a future of uncertainty. Can Canadian society sustain for future generations the benefits of forests we enjoy today?

The future of Canadian forests has been high on the agenda of Sustainable Forest Management Network Centre of Excellence (SFM Network). The Network has 12 years of experience with research and knowledge exchange crossing the social, ecological and economic dimensions of SFM. The national, interdisciplinary research partnership that draws together the knowledge and expertise of universities, industry, governments, Aboriginal groups and non-governmental organizations provides a substantial foundation for an initiative to help Canadian society prepare for the uncertain future of its forests.

The Forest Futures Project is an initiative to consolidate and focus the expertise of the SFM Network on plausible futures for the forest, and to consider the implications of these futures for Canadian society, economy and the environment. The project, approved by the SFM Network Board in January 2007, entails a national scenario-analysis exercise that will be completed by 2009.

Scenario planning is a strategic visioning process that has emerged in the business sector over the last 20 years. The process is used to allow organizations to position themselves in the context of complex and uncertain future conditions. The approach was developed by Royal Dutch Shell, has recently been applied to the global environment in the Millennium Assessment, and is being incorporated in the strategic planning activities of government agencies such as Alberta's Sustainable Resource Development Department and the Canadian Stroke Network. The Forest Futures project aims to apply the approach to explore the future of Canadian forests.

Objectives of the Forest Futures Project:

- To develop a broad understanding, at the regional and national levels, of the key drivers likely to affect Canadian forests, forestry, and forest-based benefits to society over the next 40 years;
- To document current understanding of the key drivers and their projected futures.
- To bring together expert opinion on key drivers and future conditions through regional and national discussion forums;
- To develop plausible scenarios for the future of Canada's forests, based on current knowledge and expert opinion, and to assess the implications of these scenarios for sustaining the many benefits Canadians draw from their forests;
- To assist participants and all Canadians to understand better the scope of future development alternatives and consider appropriate, plausible responses to future change and uncertainty;
- To draw regional, national and international attention to the challenges and opportunities of SFM in Canada;



Forest Futures Project Activities: Scenario analysis requires identification of key drivers, compilation of knowledge on the drivers, identification of plausible scenarios, and analysis of implications. The Forest Futures Project will involve a sequence of activities to accomplish these steps and to support analysis at both national and regional levels.

1. **Participants (April-May 2007):** A **Core Team** involving the prominent university researchers who lead the SFMN will direct the project in consultation with an **Advisory Group** made up of representatives of SFMN industry, government, Aboriginal and NGO partners along with invited representatives of other organizations. The project will be chaired by Dr. Peter Duinker of Dalhousie University and will report to the **SFMN Board of Directors** via SFMN Scientific Director Dr. Jim Fyles and Network Manager Bill Woodward. The Project will seek to involve **participants from a wide range of organizations** at various stages in the project
2. **Focal issues and key driving variables (June 2007):** In general the analysis will ask “What are possible futures for Canadian forests and the economies and societies they support and what are the implication of these futures for sustaining the multiple benefits of forests?” This key activity, to clarify the questions and identify drivers, will be carried out in a facilitated workshop involving the Core Team, Advisory Group, SFMN Partner representatives and invitees.
3. **Knowledge Synthesis (May – October 2007):** This activity will build on work of the Core Team, Advisory Group and the June workshop that will identify the knowledge needs of the scenario aspect of the Project. Short (4-10 pages), plain-language briefing notes will be researched and written on each of the key drivers. These notes will be produced as a reference set for participants in the scenario-development workshops.
4. **Scenario Development: (November 2007 – July 2008)** This is the main activity of the Project, developing plausible scenarios based on the accumulated knowledge and expertise. Scenarios will be developed in a **series of two-day workshops**. **The first, in November 2007**, will involve all of the SFMN community and invited participants. **During 2008**, it is anticipated that scenario workshops will be conducted at **several locations across the country** to solicit regional input.
5. **Integration of analyses (July – October 2008):** The output from regional scenarios will be ‘rolled up’ into a national picture by the Core Team and staff, in consultation with the Advisory Group
6. **Dissemination:** The Project will produce, in addition to the briefing notes, a set of reports describing the regional and national scenario discussions and summarizing the analyses and recommendations. These will provided to all participants and will be made widely available via the SFMN web site. The Project and its results will be a focal point of an international conference sponsored by the SFMN early in 2009.

Opportunities to be involved: The quality of the thinking and discussion that will generate the output of the Forest Futures Project will depend to a large extent on engaging a wide spectrum of participants. The project offers many opportunities for organizations to become involved through workshops and participation in the Advisory Group. Individuals or organizations interested in participating are encouraged to contact the SFM Network at info@sfmnetwork.ca.