



LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE CONTEXT

DOCUMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF TACTICAL PLAN FOR INTEGRATED FOREST PLANS 2023-2028

Nord-du-Québec Region

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1 Legal and Administrative Context

1.1 LEGAL CONTEXT

In Québec, the basic elements of the forest regime are set out in the *Sustainable Forest Development Act* (SFDA). Its aim is to ensure the long-term health of forest ecosystems so that present and future generations can enjoy the environmental, economic and social benefits that these ecosystems provide.

This module presents the main sections of the *Act* on which the tactical plan for integrated forest development (the tactical plan) is based. Information on how some of these provisions are implemented locally or regionally can be found in subsequent modules and in the tactical plan itself.

1.2 PROVISIONS GOVERNING DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

The Ministère des Ressources naturelles et des Forêts (MRNF) intervenes with respect to the use and development of forests, forest resources. Specifically, it manages all aspects of sustainable development for forests in the domain of the State. It promotes the development of the forest products industry and private woodlots. It prepares and implements research and development programs to acquire and circulate knowledge in fields relating to sound forest management and forest product processing. Its responsibilities towards Québec's forests include forest inventories, the production of seedlings and plants for reforestation, and the protection of forest resources against fire, disease and insect infestations. The ***Sustainable Forest Development Act*** governs forest development activities. Under section 1 of the Act, the forest regime is designed to:

- implement sustainable forest development, in particular through ecosystem-based development;
- ensure integrated and regionalized resource and land management based on clear, consistent objectives, measurable results and the accountability of managers and users of the forest;
- determine how responsibilities under the forest regime are shared between the State, regional bodies, Native communities and users of the forest;
- follow up and monitor forest operations in the domain of the State;
- govern the sale of timber and other forest products on the open market at a price reflecting their market value, and the supply of timber to wood processing plants;
- regulate the development of private forests;
- govern forest protection activities.

According to section 54 of the Act:

“The Minister draws up a tactical plan and an operational plan for integrated forest development for each management unit, in collaboration with the local integrated land and resource management panel set up for the unit. When drawing up the plans, the Minister may also retain the services of forest planning experts.

The **tactical plan** contains, among other things, the allowable cuts assigned to the unit, the sustainable forest development objectives, the forest development strategies adopted to ensure that allowable cuts are respected and objectives are achieved, and the location of the main infrastructures and the areas of increased timber production. This plan covers a five-year period.

The **operational plan** basically sets out the forest operations zones in which timber harvesting or other forest development activities are planned under the tactical plan. It also contains the harmonization measures adopted by the Minister. The operational plan is updated from time to time, to allow for, among other things, the gradual addition of new zones in which forest operations may be carried out.” For additional information, please see the *Planning and Monitoring* module.

According to section 55 of the Act:

“The **local integrated land and resource management panel** is set up in order to ensure that the interests and concerns of the persons and bodies affected by planned forest development are taken into account, to define local sustainable forest development objectives and to agree on measures to harmonize the use of resources.” For additional information, please see the *Analysis of Issues* document.

According to section 57 of the Act:

“**Integrated forest development plans** must be the object of a public consultation held by the body responsible for the composition and operation of the local integrated land and resource management panel or, if applicable, by the regional county municipality to which that responsibility was entrusted under section 55.1. The conduct of the public consultation, its duration, and the documents that must accompany the plans during the consultation are defined by the Minister in a manual which the Minister makes public.

If the Minister holds a consultation, the Minister prepares a report summarizing the comments obtained during the consultation. If the consultation is held by a responsible body referred to in section 21.5 of the *Act respecting the Ministère des Affaires municipales, des Régions et de l’Occupation du territoire* (chapter M-22.1) or by a regional county municipality, the body or municipality, as applicable, prepares and sends to the Minister, within the time determined by the Minister, a report summarizing the comments obtained during the consultation and, in the case of a divergence in points of view, proposes any solutions. The consultation report is made public by the Minister.”

According to section 58 of the Act:

“Throughout the process leading to the drafting of the plans, the Minister sees that forest planning is founded on ecosystem-based development and on integrated and regionalized land and resource management.”

According to section 40 of the Act:

“The Minister may, for all or part of the forest, impose on persons or bodies subject to a development plan forest development standards different from those prescribed by government regulation, when existing government standards do not provide adequate protection for all the resources of the forest due to the characteristics of the forest and the nature of the project to be carried out. The Minister may also, at the request of a Native community or on the Minister’s own initiative after consulting the Native community, impose different forest development standards to facilitate the conciliation of forest development activities with the domestic, ritual or social activities pursued by the community, or to implement an agreement that the Government or a minister enters into with the community.

The Minister may also authorize a departure from the regulatory standards if it is shown that the substitute measures proposed by persons or bodies subject to a development plan offer equivalent or superior protection for forest resources and the forest environment.

The Minister defines, in the plan, the forest development standards imposed or authorized and specifies the places where they are applicable, any regulatory standards they replace, and the mechanisms for ensuring their application. The Minister specifies, in the plan, from among the fines prescribed in section 246, the one to which an offender is liable for a given offence.”

1.3 PROVISIONS RELATING TO INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

The SFDA includes provisions specific to the Indigenous communities. Section 6, for example, states that: “Taking account of the interests, values and needs of the Native communities present on forest lands is an integral part of sustainable forest development.” Similarly, section 7 of the Act states that: “The Minister must consult Native communities specifically to ensure that sustainable forest development and forest management take into account, and accommodate if necessary, their interests, values and needs.” More specifically, the MRNF consults the Indigenous communities affected by forest planning in order to hear their concerns regarding the potential impacts of the planned activities for the activities pursued by the communities for sustenance, domestic, ritual or social purposes, and accommodate them where necessary.

In addition to the separate consultations conducted by the MRNF, the Indigenous communities are invited to take part in the work of the local integrated land and resource management panel (the panel).

Under section 40 of the Act, the Minister may also impose different forest development standards to facilitate the conciliation of forest development activities with the domestic, ritual or social activities pursued by the Indigenous people for sustenance, domestic, ritual or social purposes.

Other than in the context of the SFDA, it is important to note that the MRNF has a constitutional duty to consult and, where applicable, accommodate the Indigenous communities when it is considering a decision or action that may have a prejudicial impact on their established or potential ancestral or treaty rights.

The 17 management units in the Nord-du-Québec region are covered by the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement (JBNQA). Fourteen of these 17 management units are also located within the area covered by the Agreement Concerning a New Relationship Between the Gouvernement du Québec and the Crees of Québec (known as the Paix des Braves). The adapted forest regime described in Chapter 3 of the Paix des Braves regulates forest development planning and plan revisions, as well as Cree community participation and consultation.

For additional information, see:

[Sustainable Forest Development Act](#)

2 Provincial Orientations

To complement the legislation and regulations, the MRNF has devised a set of provincial orientations that set out its approach to the social, ecological and economic aspects of sustainable forest development. A five-yearly review of sustainable forest development is required to report on the progress made and on the implementation of government strategies.

2.1 SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The **Sustainable Forest Management Strategy** (SFMS) serves as the foundation for all the MRNF's policies and actions. It sets out a vision for the progression of sustainable forest development. Its challenges and orientations provide direction for the next 20 to 25 years, while its objectives are more immediate in scope.

2.1.1 VISION OF SUSTAINABLE FOREST DEVELOPMENT

The vision of sustainable development set out in the Strategy addresses the three aspects (environmental, social and economic) of sustainable development. Hence: Québec's forests are a source of pride, wealth, stimulating jobs and development for everyone. Québec is known worldwide for the quality and diversity of its forest, its exemplary, sustainable forest management practices, and the quality of its forestry products and services.

2.1.2 THE SIX CHALLENGES

The Sustainable Forest Management Strategy is structured around six challenges, chosen to reflect the Department's vision of sustainable forest development and to cover all forest management in Québec. The challenges are inspired by the environmental, social and economic aspects of the sustainable forest development criteria.

1. Take the interests, values and needs of the Québec population and the Aboriginal nations into account in managing the forests.
2. Use forest management practices that ensure ecosystem sustainability.
3. Ensure productive forests that create wealth at different levels.
4. Support a diversified, competitive and innovative wood products and forestry industry.
5. Ensure that forests and the forest sector help fight and adapt to climate change.
6. Ensure sustainable, structured and transparent forest management.

Each challenge has its own orientations that set out the direction to be taken when moving forward with sustainable forest development.

The objectives set out the goals to be achieved in the five years following the Strategy's adoption or revision. The actions indicate the steps the MRNF intends to take to achieve those objectives.

2.1.3 IMPLEMENTATION

The Sustainable Forest Development Strategy is aimed at individuals and organizations concerned by the forest because of their activities or interests. It is of relevance to every stakeholder involved in sustainable forest development, in their specific areas of responsibility (e.g. forestry companies, forestry associations, forest users, wildlife agencies, contractors, regional agencies for private forest development, private woodlot owners, Indigenous communities and private citizens).

Given that the Strategy embraces many elements and tools from the current forest regime, it will be implemented gradually, through a management approach focused on objectives and results which leaves more room to select methods and actions that will lead to success.

For additional information, please see:
[Sustainable Forest Development Strategy Reporting — SFD \(in French only\)](#)

2.2 QUÉBEC WOOD PRODUCTION STRATEGY

The **Québec Wood Production Strategy** (QWPS) seeks to build on the economic element of the Sustainable Forest Management Strategy by committing firmly to the creation of wealth from Québec’s public and private forests. It provides for consistency in timber production in Québec and offers a means of achieving government climate change prevention targets.

The aim of the QWPS is to produce more wood with the characteristics sought by markets, through profitable investments and by developing the forest’s existing potential, in order to create more wealth. It introduces a vision, targets and clear objectives for wood production that will be achieved among other things through wood production strategies prepared by individual regions.

The QWPS targets an annual harvested volume increase of at least 4 million cubic metres of wood starting in 2025, 13.9 million cubic metres in the period up to 2050, and 23.9 million cubic metres by 2080. These additional volumes will generate economic impacts in every region of Québec. As a result, Québec’s forest sector GDP will be in excess of \$3 billion in 2050 and \$6 billion in 2080 (2018 dollars).

The QWPS is structured around the following five areas of focus, which in turn are broken down into 11 objectives and 22 specific actions:

1. Production of economically desirable wood
2. Harvesting of available wood
3. The private forest’s contribution to collective wealth
4. The forest sector’s contribution to climate change mitigation goals
5. Innovation and knowledge

The QWPS is consistent with the government’s existing forest sector strategies and measures, including the Sustainable Forest Management Strategy. It also introduces some provincial indicators on which public reports will be published, among other thing through the Sustainable Forest Development Review.

For additional information, please see:
[Overview of the QWPS Québec Wood Production Strategy — PDF](#)

2.3 FIGHT AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE

2.3.1 CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS IMPACTS FOR THE FOREST

Climate change is caused by higher concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. One of the greenhouse gases of most concern is carbon dioxide (CO₂), concentrations of which have increased by 40% since the pre-industrial period. This increase is due to the growing use of fossil fuels and a global reduction in forested areas.

Climate change is identified from alterations to temperatures and precipitation regimes (average trends and seasonal spread), as well as from the recurrence of extreme weather events. In Québec, temperature records already show a general increase across all regions.¹ Although the variations differ by location, average temperatures increased by 1 °C in the period from 1961 to 2010. Climate models circulated by the *Consortium sur la climatologie régionale et l'adaptation aux changements climatiques* (Ouranos) anticipate even greater changes between now and 2100.²

In Québec's commercial forest, annual temperature increases of between 3 and 7 degrees Celsius are anticipated from now until 2100, depending on the region concerned and the greenhouse gas scenarios applied. The anticipated variations in average annual precipitation are less significant than the temperature variations. However, the trends in seasonal distribution of precipitation (rain and snow) are expected to change, with the models generally suggesting that, while annual precipitation will increase, summer precipitation is likely to remain stable and winter precipitation in the form of snow will decrease. Additionally, an increase in summer temperatures combined with stagnation of precipitation levels suggests that there will be an increased risk of drought.

- Climate change will have direct and indirect impacts for the forests. For example:
- The habitats of forest species will likely migrate northwards as the climate becomes warmer, since climate influences the ability of forest species to become established, survive and remain productive.
- Natural disturbance regimes (e.g. fires, insect outbreaks) will be altered, and this will affect species distribution, forest age structures and, in some cases, forest resiliency.
- Other species may benefit from the new climate conditions. These opportunities will help to foster forest resiliency and diversify timber development options.
- The habitats of animal and plant species associated with the forest will also be affected by climate change.

Interactions between climate change impacts are difficult to quantify. However, it is likely that species experiencing climate conditions to which they are less suited will be more vulnerable to extreme weather events such as droughts, or to insect outbreaks.

2.3.2 REPERCUSSIONS FOR NATURAL DISTURBANCES

The task of considering climate change impacts in the forest development process is a challenging one. As a first step, the MRNF, in collaboration with various partners, is currently working to identify the forest-

¹ [MDELCCFP] ministère de l'Environnement et de la Lutte contre les changements climatique, de la Faune et des Parcs. Service Info-Climat, [EN LIGNE], [Service Info-climat (gouv.qc.ca)] (Consulté le 15 mai 2020).

² OURANOS (2015). *Vers l'adaptation. Synthèse des connaissances sur les changements climatiques au Québec*. Partie 1 : Évolution climatique au Québec. Édition 2015. Montréal, Québec : Ouranos, 114 p.

related issues raised by climate change, and the repercussions for the natural disturbance regime have emerged as a priority. The following paragraphs describe the main natural disturbances that will impact the forest, along with the work currently being done.

2.3.2.1 Forest fires

Forest fires influence the composition, structure and dynamics of Québec's forest ecosystems. Climate change will have impacts on the occurrence of fires, lengthening the fire season, increasing the number of days of drought when fires are most likely to be triggered, and so on. Most research has tended to show that the number and severity of fires will increase in the spruce-lichen, spruce-moss and fir-white birch bioclimatic domains, and more markedly so in the western portion of the province.

Fires in the province's more southerly bioclimatic domains are also expected to increase, although to a lesser extent.

The MRNF, in its 2013-2020 Climate Change Action Plan, analyzed the severity of forest fires and the regeneration of boreal ecosystems within the context of climate change. The long-term impacts of increased forest fire frequency and intensity are currently being modelled as part of the 2030 Plan for a Green Economy.

2.3.2.2 Spruce budworm

In the last century, spruce budworm outbreaks have occurred roughly once every 30 years. The duration and severity of an outbreak is determined by:

- the presence and abundance of host species (fir and spruce);
- the influence of weather conditions on the insect's performance;
- the response of natural enemies.

Spruce budworm outbreaks lead to high levels of mortality in the fir domains, where host species are concentrated. Fir trees are more vulnerable to defoliation than spruce trees, and are therefore more likely to suffer mortality. Mature trees in poor health or situated in pure stands of vulnerable species are also at more risk for defoliation.

Climate is one of the main factors controlling the insect's development. It is therefore highly probable that climate change will have an impact on the insect's range and on the frequency and severity of damage in the coming decades.

- The anticipated changes in the province are as follows:
- a northward shift in the northern defoliation boundary;
- reduced population growth and defoliation frequency in the middle section of the historical distribution belt;
- research suggests that the persistence of the southern defoliation boundary will vary, probably depending on the persistence (or not) of host species in those areas.

The MRNF is currently working to develop improved outbreak monitoring methods using satellite imaging in order to map annual spruce budworm defoliation patterns and generate data on deteriorating vegetation conditions in damaged areas. Among other things, a tool that will use artificial intelligence and

satellite imaging to continuously monitor the conditions of the forest canopy is currently under development (Treenetsat) in a research area located in Québec's mixedwood forest.

2.3.2.3 Forest tent caterpillar

The forest tent caterpillar is present in all the province's bioclimatic domains except for the spruce-moss forest, where it is present in the southern portion only. Climate is the main element that controls the insect's range and epidemic period dynamics. Other factors influence defoliation, including species, stand composition and tree health. The species most vulnerable to forest tent caterpillar defoliation is the trembling aspen, followed by the white birch, sugar maple and red oak.

In the coming decades, changes to the climate are likely to affect the insect's range and the frequency and severity of the damage it causes. So far, there has been no research to document the probable evolution of the insect's range in Québec. However, North American researchers have retrospectively examined the impact of climate on outbreak behaviours and have formulated some hypotheses regarding potential changes:

- northward expansion of the range but no contraction in the south;
- increased frequency and severity of outbreaks as a result of lower winter mortality in milder winters;
- changes to the synchronism, cyclicity and frequency of outbreaks if climatic anomalies are greater than those of caterpillar outbreaks.

The tools mentioned in the spruce budworm section can also be used to help identify areas damaged by the forest tent caterpillar, in order to limit potential impacts.

2.3.2.4 Drought

A drought is a shortage of water caused by abnormally low precipitation levels, abnormally warm temperatures or a combination of the two. The southern and western portions of Québec are affected by droughts more frequently than the other sectors of Québec, where average temperatures are lower and/or annual precipitation levels are higher.

The impacts of a drought depend on a number of elements, including its scope, intensity, duration and timing (season). Its impacts for the forest also depend on the accumulation of stressors and the time between droughts, which may limit or allow for tree recovery.

Modelling suggests that south-western Québec, where summer conditions are already drier than in the rest of the province, will be most affected by future droughts.

Several studies are currently underway as part of the Plan for a Green Economy to document the impacts of drought on forest productivity and regeneration, with a view to predicting resilience, growth and allowable cuts within a context of climate change. In particular, genetic-based work to improve forest resilience and adaptability will allow for changes to forestry practices in the short term through the production of plants that are better adjusted to future weather conditions.

2.3.3 ADDITIONAL APPROACHES TO FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE

The fight against climate change is taking place on several different fronts and is aimed at mitigating the results of climate warming and adapting to new conditions.

Climate change **mitigation** efforts are designed to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and sequester them outside the atmosphere. The forests naturally play a role in this process, since they sequester and store carbon in vegetation and soils, acting as a carbon well. The forest may occasionally become a source of carbon (e.g. in years with lots of fires). Forest development plays a role in the mitigation effort when forestry practices help to improve forest productivity and when the harvested timber is processed into forest products with long life cycles. In addition to storing carbon, forest products can replace materials manufactured using large quantities of energy or from petroleum products. For example, biofuels can be used instead of fossil fuels to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. An increase in wooded areas (e.g. through afforestation of previously unforested sites such as agricultural wildland) can enhance the mitigation potential of the developed forest. Similarly, ecosystem conservation strengthens the forests' sequestration capacity by protecting large carbon reservoirs (e.g. wetlands and some old-growth forests).

Despite these mitigation efforts, climate changes will still occur and are likely to be accentuated in the future. To limit their anticipated negative impacts for forest ecosystems and to take advantage of the opportunities they offer, an effort must also be made to **adapt** forest management and development to the new conditions. This will allow forest ecosystems to maintain their resilience and productive capacity and continue to deliver all the ecological services expected by society.

2.3.4 INCLUSION OF CLIMATE CHANGE ISSUES IN THE FOREST PLANNING PROCESS

The *Sustainable Forest Development Act* states that forest management must take the impacts of climate change for the forests into account. The *Sustainable Forest Management Strategy* takes the same approach by setting objectives designed to incorporate the impacts of climate change in forest management and development (objectives 2 and 3).

The MRNF has been working since 2016 to identify the forest development issues raised by climate change. In October 2021, it tabled a draft *Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for Forest Management and Development* for public and Indigenous consultations. The draft Strategy is based on four key topics designed to:

- improve knowledge of the impacts of climate change;
- strengthen integrated management of the risks associated with natural disturbances;
- maintain the forest's resilience and productive capacity;
- maintain access to the forest.

The *Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for Forest Management and Development* will help ensure the development of new knowledge on the impacts of climate change and the gradual introduction of concrete measures at the provincial and regional levels to adjust sustainable forest management and development practices.

It will also play a role in addressing Objective 3 of the *Québec Wood Production Strategy*, namely to “Increase the robustness of management strategies so that they are able to withstand risk and uncertainty in the context of climate change”. This objective will be addressed via the regional wood production strategies, among other things by:

- incorporating risk management orientations associated with natural disturbances into development strategies;
- diversifying wood production options in order to respond to different issues;
- gradually incorporating the impacts of climate change into forest plans.

These actions will be incorporated gradually into the regional wood production strategies in order to take into account the knowledge developed in the years immediately following the deployment of the *Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for Forest Management and Development*.

The MRNF’s action plan for incorporating climate change into forest plans will be built into the *Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for Forest Management and Development*. In the short term, it will be based on intensifying knowledge acquisition activities with a view to documenting the anticipated issues in detail and acquiring a better understanding of forest development adaptation options. In the longer term, it will aim to adapt current forestry strategies and practices to the impacts of climate change. In the meantime, the MRNF has already implemented a number of actions that will help to prepare forest ecosystems and the forest sector for climate change (Table 1).

Table 1: Examples of current and future actions designed to adapt the forests to climate change

Action	Knowledge acquisition	Adaptation of development
Current provincial actions		
Diagnosis of regional vulnerabilities	X	
Research project on the use of new species for reforestation in southern Québec to enhance ecosystem resistance and resilience	X	
Research project on the capacity of the main northern and boreal temperate species to adapt their regeneration to future climate conditions	X	
Research project on the trajectories taken by forests under development in response to natural disturbances: better predict resilience, growth and allowable cuts in a context of climate change	X	
Deployment of assisted migration of genetic sources for white spruce and black spruce reforestation		X
Conservation of riparian areas and wetlands to foster connectivity		X
Maintenance of a forest reserve similar in size to previous old-growth forests		X
Maintenance of residual forests in aggregated cutblocks to foster habitat connectivity		X
Maintenance of residual trees in certain total cutblocks to foster natural regeneration		X
Renewal of seed nurseries		X
Analysis of monitoring systems to check their ability to detect current changes	X	
Current regional actions		
Encourage planners to gain a better understanding of the impacts and repercussions of climate change for forestry.	X	

Action	Knowledge acquisition	Adaptation of development
Future provincial actions		
Improvement of monitoring systems to detect current changes	X	
Updating of species composition goals (if required, depending on regional diagnosis)		X
Deployment and documentation of silvicultural trials of silvicultural adaptation scenarios	X	
Analysis of economic viability of various integrated management options for risks associated with natural disturbances (prevention, detection, preventive silvicultural practices and direct prevention)	X	
Characterization of the forest road network's vulnerability to anticipated flow variations	X	
Reviews of regional wood production strategies		X
Future regional actions (action plan to be developed)		
Better fit between the Québec Wood Production Strategy and the Climate Change Action Plan		X
Understand and classify regional priority issues with respect to climate change (Paix des braves, caribou, paludification, winter roads, non-commercial silvicultural work, etc.)	X	
Identify and assess the climate change-related risks for each of these issues		X

The MRNF is also working actively on climate change impact mitigation by developing knowledge and tools that will help maximize the contributory potential of natural environments and wood products in the greenhouse gas reduction effort. The first *Plan for a Green Economy* implementation plan confirms a budget of \$16.9 million for the MRNF until 2025-2026.

The MRNF intends to play a key role in developing a better understanding of the vulnerabilities and opportunities arising from climate change. It will strengthen its ability to detect climate change impacts as they occur. Using a range of knowledge sources and discussions with forestry sector stakeholders as its basis, it will, over time, develop and deploy coherent adaptation solutions in its various fields of activity.

2.4 ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The Regional Operations Sector (ROS) has established and adopted an environmental and forest-related policy that asserts the Sector's undertaking to:

- comply with and even exceed legal requirements;
- continue to improve its environmental and forestry performance;
- prevent, reduce and fight against pollution;
- act like an informed owner.

To implement its environmental and forest-related policy, the Sector has deployed an environmental management system based on sustainable forest development criteria.

The system applies to activities governed by the SFDA concerning forestry plans, management of contracts and agreements, and monitoring and control of forestry work.

Companies that carry out forest development work on behalf of the MRNF also take actions that affect the environment. They must therefore have a certificate recognized by the Minister (ISO 14001 or Forest Management Certification [FMC]) to show that they are able to control the environmental repercussions of their own activities. By being accountable, the forest development companies support the MRNF by helping to implement and monitor forest management work based on sound environmental management practices. It is also a way of harmonizing practices, standardizing norms, facilitating communications between the MRNF and its collaborators, and ensuring that forest certification is maintained over time.

3 Planning and Monitoring

The MRNF is responsible for forest planning and management on public land, for carrying out work in the forests, and for monitoring and controlling that work. It fulfills its responsibilities and exercises its powers in compliance with the Sustainable Forest Management Strategy.

3.1 PUBLIC LAND USE PLAN

The **public land use plan** is a general guidance tool that structures the actions of the government departments and agencies responsible for managing land and resources in the domain of the State. The plan is drawn up at administrative region level. It presents and conveys the government's orientations for public land use and protection. These orientations are prepared jointly by several different departments and agencies, under the responsibility of the Ministère des Ressources naturelles et des Forêts (MRNF). The MRNF must take the government's orientations, as presented in the plan, into account when managing public land. Coordination steps are provided for in the integrated forest development plan preparation process.

Compliance with usage zoning information (e.g. conservation, priority or exclusive use, etc.) from the public land use plan has been incorporated seamlessly into the strategic and operational planning process. It is assured by means of a regional tool to control the use of the forest, which incorporates exclusion zones and special conditions for development activities. In addition, the objectives specific to multiple use zones are taken into account in the legislative and regulatory framework, by the integrated land and resource management panels, in measures to address the values and issues set out in the Forest Management Strategy, through the public consultation process and through the harmonization process with partners.

For additional information, please see:

[Public Land Use Plan](#)

3.2 FOREST PLANNING

Forest development activities are planned at management unit level by the MRNF regional office concerned. There are two plans: the **tactical plan for integrated forest development** and the **operational plan for integrated forest development**. These plans are prepared as part of a collaborative process at regional level, using an ecosystem-based approach to sustainable forest development. They reflect the efficiency objectives and targets set for forestry work.

3.2.1 TACTICAL PLAN FOR INTEGRATED FOREST DEVELOPMENT

The tactical plan covers a period of five years. It presents the sustainable forest development objectives, along with the strategy that will be applied to achieve those objectives and ensure compliance with allowable cuts.

The MRNF's planner must propose development solutions that address the social, economic and environmental issues identified by the local integrated land and resource management panels for the management unit. The chosen solutions then serve as a basis for selecting the best possible silvicultural scenarios.

3.2.2 OPERATIONAL PLAN FOR INTEGRATED FOREST DEVELOPMENT

The operational plan mainly presents the forest operations zones in which timber harvesting and other development activities (non-commercial silvicultural work and road work) will take place in accordance with the tactical plan. In other words, it identifies the zones in which forestry work will be carried out.

The planner works with the timber marketing board to identify the sectors in which timber will be sold on the free market. The timber marketing board's role is to establish the yearly merchantable value of standing timber and other products from the public forest, and the amount of annual dues to be paid by supply guarantee holders. It does this by means of a public bidding process. Under the *Sustainable Forest Development Act*, any person or body can purchase timber by taking part in the auction sales announced on the timber marketing board's website.

For additional information, please see:

[Timber Marketing Board](#)

3.2.3 ANNUAL PLAN

The **annual plan** presents the prescribed, harmonized forest operations zones in which forest development activities will take place in a specific year. The plan is prepared in compliance with the forest development strategy set out in the tactical plan, based on the forest operations zones presented in the operational plan. The annual plan for harvesting work is drawn up by the holders of rights in the forest, under an agreement with the MRNF, while the annual plan for non-commercial work is prepared by the MRNF itself.

3.2.4 SPECIAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS

When a large tract of forest is damaged by a natural disturbance (forest fire, insect infestation or windfall), the MRNF draws up a special development plan to ensure that the timber is salvaged and, where necessary, the damaged areas are restored to production.

For additional information, please see:

[MFFP website — Forest planning](#)

3.3 FOREST CERTIFICATION

Forest certification is a voluntary process in which an independent, accredited certification body certifies that forest management practices comply with predetermined sustainable forest development standards. These standards are developed by different certification systems.

Three internationally recognized forest certification systems can be used in Québec. They are administered by:

- the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI)
- the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®)
- the Canadian Standards Association (CSA)

Although each forest certification system has its own specific features, they all cover the major issues currently encountered in sustainable forest development and promote a form of forest management that is ecologically, socially and economically responsible.

In Québec's public forests, it is the supply guarantee holders that generally obtain forest certification. The MRNF fulfills its responsibilities by encouraging the companies to obtain and maintain certificates. Exchange and collaboration initiatives have been set up for this purpose, including the operations panels, which help to align certification needs with forest plans.

Certification is primarily a business decision to develop new markets, address customers' requests or convey a responsible brand image. Certified companies therefore select the certification system that best suits their needs. For the MRNF, forest certification provides additional recognition for the quality of sustainable forest development achieved by Québec's forest regime. In addition, it helps to improve forestry practices.

Generally speaking, a certificate is awarded for a management unit, or for the area covered by a tactical plan. All timber harvested in a certified area can be sold under the certification system's trademark. A certificate may cover several management units (multi-site certificate or multiple unit certificate). In some cases, a management unit may be covered by more than one certificate.

The regional and local issues, objectives, development strategy and silvicultural scenarios in the tactical plans address some of the specific requirements of certified management units. Other aspects that meet forest certification requirements include public consultations and consultations of Indigenous communities before the tactical plan is accepted.

A [provincial map](#) shows certified areas by certification system, in each management unit.

3.3.1.1 Regional forest certification data

The forestry companies holding forest development certificates for areas located in the same region are listed in the table below. For further information on these certificates, including the results of verification audits, please visit the certification body's website by clicking on the name of the company.

For the Nord-du-Québec region, a map present, at the scale of the management the areas certified by each certification system.

For additional information, please see:

[MFFP Website — Forest certification](#)

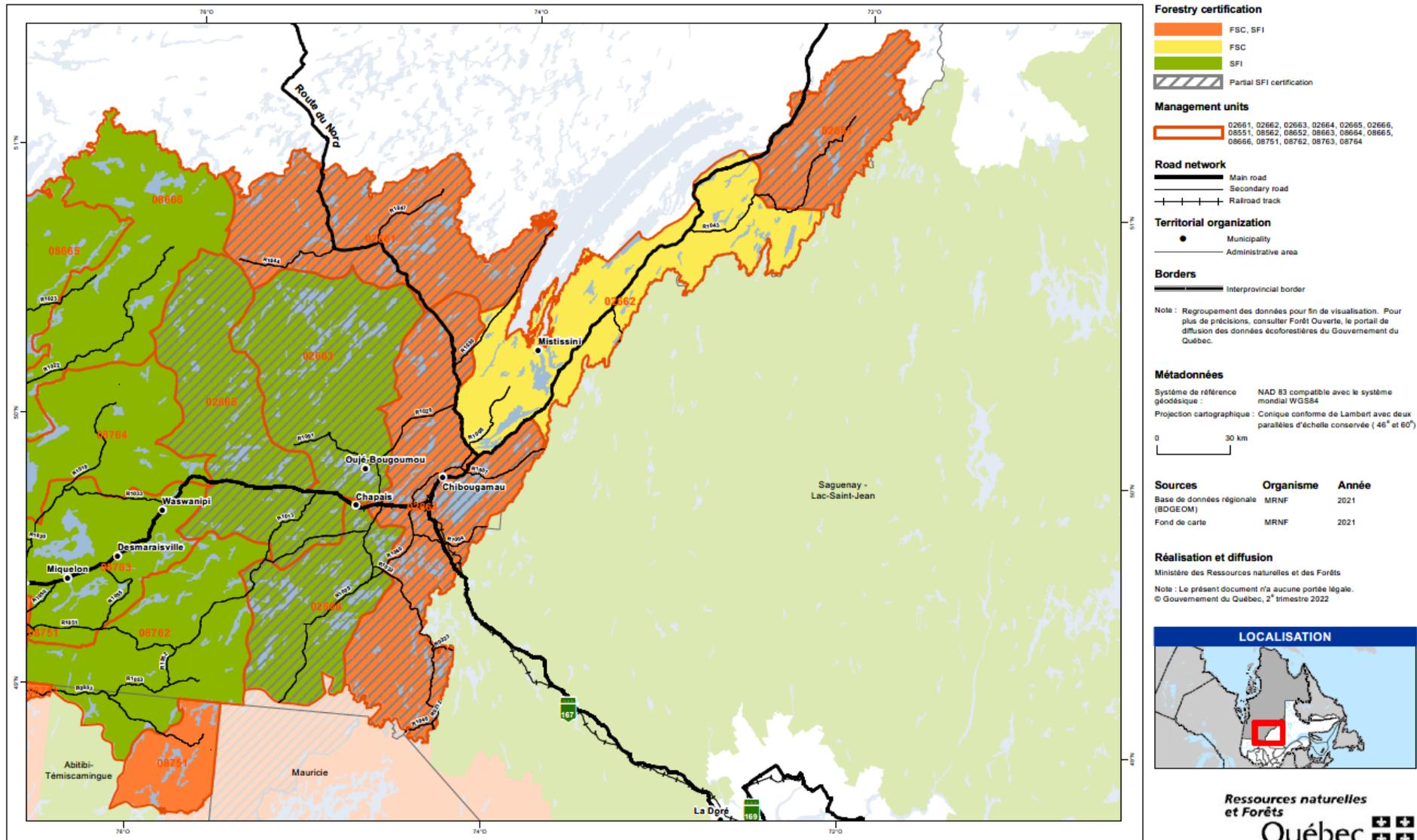
Table 2: Forestry certification Portrait in Nord-du-Québec¹

Certification system	Certificate holder	Type of certificate	Scope of certificate on public land	Area certified (ha)
FSC	Chantiers Chibougamau Ltée	Multiple MU	026-61, 026-62, 026-64	2 371 150
FSC	Interfor	Multiple MU	086-63, 086-64	679 900
FSC	Produits forestiers Résolu Canada inc.	Multiple MU	084-51, 087-51	1 383 760
FSC	GreenFirst - Gestion forestière Abitibi-Ouest	Multiple MU	082-51, 085-51, 085-62	1 764 233
SFI*	Barrette-Chapais Ltée	Multisite	026-51, 026-61, 026-63, 026-64, 026-65, 026-66, 042-51, 043-51, 087-51, 087-62, 087-63, 087-64	1 359 859
SFI	Eacom Timber Corporation	Multisite	083-51, 086-63, 086-64	2 041 340
SFI	Produits forestiers Résolu Canada inc.	Multisite	024-71 (portion corresponding to 024-51), 025-71, 027-51, 042-51, 043-52, 071-51, 071-52, 073-51, 073-52, 074-51, 084-51, 084-62, 086-65, 086-66, 087-51, 087-62, 087-63, 087-64, 093-51	16 234 476
SFI	West Fraser Mills Ltd	Multisite	082-51, 085-51, 086-51, 086-52	2 579 644

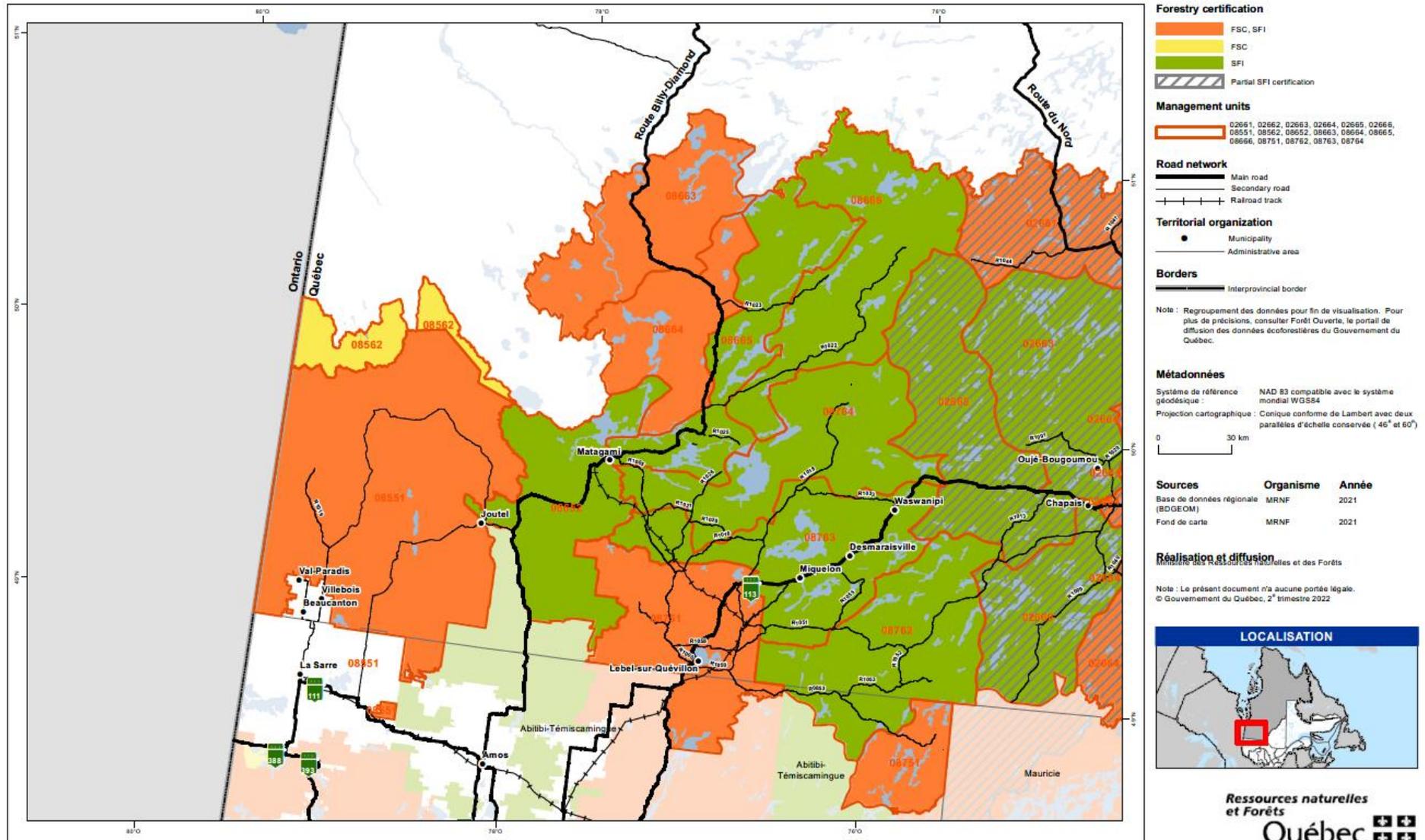
*Partial SFI certification: Corresponds to the area equivalent to the supply guarantee volume used by BCL and BMMB from MU 026-65 and 026-66.

¹ Management units in blue are covered by the certificate but are located in a different region

Carte 1: Portrait forest certification Nord-du-Québec eastern part



Carte 2: Portrait forest certification Nord-du-Québec western part



3.4 FOREST MONITORING

The inputs used in the forest planning process are derived from knowledge and an understanding of the issues. Knowledge acquisition and monitoring helps to understand how ecosystems react and change. Inputs vary by region and interact with other factors in a complex way.

Several forest ecosystem monitoring systems are already used in Québec, including:

- The ecoforest inventory of southern Québec
- The forest ecosystem oversight network
- The natural disturbance detection systems
- Biodiversity monitoring

These monitoring systems, through their scope and the recurrent nature of their data collection activities, are important in identifying the impacts of sustainable forest development. Data on the success of previous work is also used to guide future strategies and influence future tactical plans.

To optimize the data acquisition process, improve its ability to detect change and facilitate the application of appropriate adaptations, the MRNF uses an approach that includes exchanges and complementarity with other authorities that are active in the forests, including universities, federal research centres, private forest partners, First Nations and other key partners and players.

3.4.1 TYPES OF MONITORING

Under the *Sustainable Forest Development Act*, the MRNF is responsible for monitoring forestry work. To do this, it verifies the quality of development work and the extent to which the objectives established during the planning process have been achieved. Monitoring provides important information for the implementation of the development strategy and ongoing improvements to practices.

3.4.2 VALIDATION MONITORING (ACTUAL EFFECTS)

Monitoring and identification of impacts are important, not only to understand how ecosystems react to and change as a result of development scenarios, but also to inform predictions and reduce uncertainty. The MRNF monitors the impacts of forestry work in the medium and longer terms, using a network of sample plots to measure the real impacts of silvicultural treatments. The network, established by the Direction de la recherche forestière, in collaboration with the MRNF's regional offices, is used to verify initial assumptions concerning the natural evolution of the forest and the anticipated impacts of different silvicultural treatments.

3.4.3 COMPLIANCE MONITORING

Compliance monitoring (also known as “compliance control”) is carried out immediately upon completion of forestry work and is designed to see whether that work, done by a silvicultural company or forestry company, is in compliance with the silvicultural prescription, the applicable standards and the conditions set out on a permit, licence, contract or agreement under the *Sustainable Forest Development Act*.

The silvicultural prescriptions produced by the MRNF contain operational instructions and treatment success criteria that are used to assess compliance and calculate the amounts of any financial assistance

that may be payable. The prescriptions are prepared in line with the *Guide sylvicole du Québec* and the measurement methods associated with the criteria and assessed during the compliance monitoring process are described in the [Guide d'inventaire et d'échantillonnage en milieu forestier](#).

The companies carrying out the work must provide a declaration of compliance with the *Regulation respecting the sustainable development of forests in the domain of the State* (RSDF) and any harmonization measures. The declaration must be produced under the supervision and authority of a forest engineer.

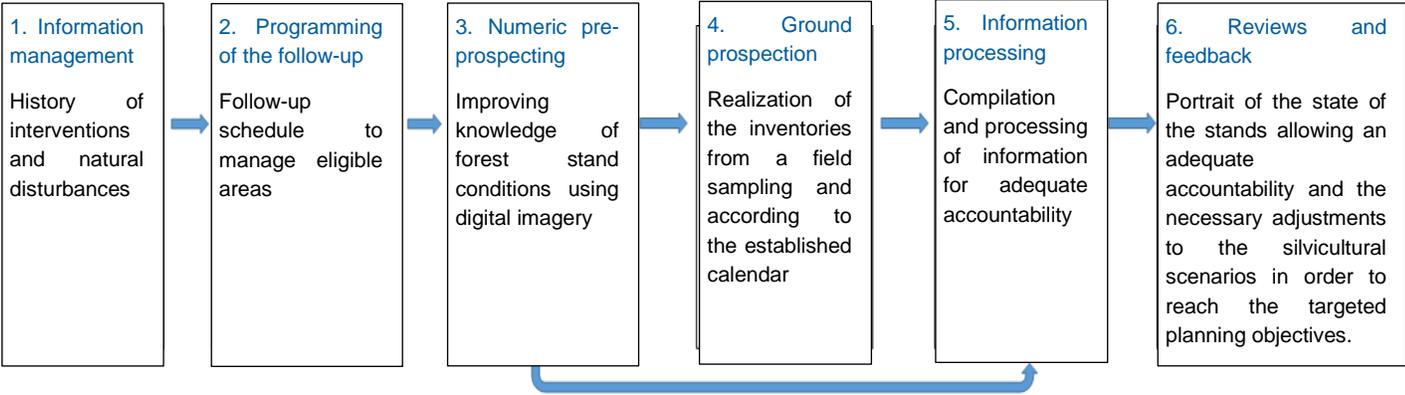
The MRNF has established a management framework for reporting and control. The framework describes the control activities, their aims and how they should be carried out, for example by means of a start-up meeting, site visit, end-of-work declaration, annual report or account. Together, these control activities are designed to identify problems so that remedial action can be taken where necessary. Among other things, regional control plans verify the quality of the information provided by stakeholders, and confirm the quality of the work done. The sample-based risk management approach helps to ensure that the objectives are met and that the stakeholders themselves are accountable. Control efforts are adjusted to the scope of the silvicultural investments and the level of risk presented by the forest development activity concerned and the company responsible for carrying it out.

Situations are documented and reported to the companies concerned, so that ongoing improvements can be made. In short, the results of the control process are used to adjust or improve practices and forest development strategies where necessary. Penal proceedings may be instituted.

3.4.4 EFFICIENCY MONITORING

The purpose of efficiency monitoring is to see whether the actions taken in the forests have enabled the objectives to be achieved, in particular with respect to the establishment and condition of post-treatment regeneration.

The efficiency monitoring process is designed to ensure timely identification of potential problems (establishment or release of regeneration, etc.), so that appropriate remedial measures can be planned and the objectives can be achieved. It also facilitates the reporting process. It takes place as follows:



Provincial indicators have been adopted to assess the efficiency of silvicultural work (see Table 3). These indicators include targets and monitoring timeframes, which vary by type and intensity of silvicultural

work. Minimum thresholds must be met, based on distribution coefficients (DCs) for regeneration (in the case of site inventories) or cover (in the case of digital imaging inventories). These indicators focus on two types of monitoring:

Regeneration establishment monitoring (area regenerated):

- for clear-cut areas;
- for partial cut areas;
- for areas subjected to natural disturbances occurring since 2013 and with no special development plan (salvage).

Regeneration condition monitoring (free growth area):

- for areas that have been subjected to a treatment involving artificial regeneration (planting and fill).

Table 3: Summary of provincial indicators of regeneration establishment and condition

Work monitored	Intensity	Timeframe for threshold achievement	Threshold required
1. Clear-cut (regular structure)	Extensive	10 years post-harvest	DC commercial tree species $\geq 50\%$ or cover $\geq 50\%$
	Basic	5 years post-harvest	DC desired tree species $\geq 60\%$ or cover $\geq 55\%$
	Intensive/Elite	5 years post-harvest	DC desired tree species $\geq 75\%$
2. Partial cut aimed at establishing regeneration of desired species (regular, irregular and selection structure)	Basic	5 years after the last regeneration work	DC desired tree species $\geq 60\%$ or cover $\geq 55\%$
	Intensive/Elite		DC desired tree species $\geq 75\%$
3. Natural disturbance with no special salvage development plan	Extensive	10 years after a major disturbance	DC commercial tree species $\geq 50\%$ or cover $\geq 45\%$ If a salvage plan is applied, monitoring is as for clearcutting
4. Artificial regeneration work	Basic	15 years post-planting	DC future desired species $\geq 60\%$ or cover $\geq 60\%$
	Intensive/Elite		DC future desired species $\geq 75\%$

3.4.5 REGIONAL MONITORING

Different types of monitoring can be carried out at regional level. For example, regions may establish their own regional indicators for use in monitoring silvicultural diagnoses and scenarios. In addition, monitoring may address the regional wood production strategy or various regional issues. The types of monitoring to be carried out are described in detail in the tactical plan for the management unit.

For additional information, please see:
[Tactical plan per MU](#)

4 Participatory Management

Today, forest management is influenced by a number of elements, including the range and diversity of forest users, ecosystem sustainability requirements, an increased demand for new uses of forest resources, and consideration of community expectations. To take all these different interests, values and needs into account, the Ministère des Ressources naturelles et des Forêts favours participatory management through which forest users can be involved in the planning process. Under the *Sustainable Forest Development Act*, the forest planning process uses two participatory mechanisms, namely the local integrated land and resource management panel, and public consultations.

4.1 LOCAL INTEGRATED LAND AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PANEL

The local integrated land and resource management panel brings together individuals and organizations concerned by the development of the area's forests. The panel works with the MRNF to prepare the tactical and operational plans, by identifying local forest development issues and making recommendations to ensure that they are taken into consideration in the forest plans. The panel's recommendations must respect provincial policy guidelines (e.g. the Sustainable Forest Management Strategy and the Québec Wood Production Strategy) and regional orientations (e.g. the public land use plan).

In accordance with section 55 of the *Sustainable Forest Development Act*, the panel's composition and operations, including its dispute resolution panel, fall under the responsibility of the Minister or, where applicable, the competent bodies mentioned in section 21.5 of the *Act respecting the Ministère des Affaires municipales, des Régions et de l'Occupation du territoire* (chapter M-22.1). The Minister or body must, however, ensure that the following individuals or bodies, or their representatives, are invited to take part in the panel:

1. The Indigenous communities, represented by their band council
2. The regional county municipalities and, if applicable, the metropolitan community
3. The holders of a timber supply guarantee
4. The individuals or bodies that manage controlled zones
5. The individuals or bodies authorized to organize activities, provide services or carry on a business in a wildlife sanctuary
6. The holders of an outfitters' licence
7. The holders of a sugar bush management permit for acericultural purposes
8. The lessees of land for agricultural purposes
9. The holders of trapping licences who hold a lease of exclusive trapping rights
10. The regional environmental councils

See the section entitled "Analysis of issues" and the "Regional and local issues" modules for additional information on the issues chosen and the means by which they are considered in the forest planning process.

In the Nord-du-Québec region, this task has been entrusted to two regional bodies, namely the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government and the Cree Nation Government. The Sustainable Forest

Management Program, for which the two regional bodies act as delegates, was designed to ensure the panels' operations and the achievement of specific projects.

As a result, in February 2016, Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government (EIJBRG) set up nine TLGIRTs for Category III lands. These TLGIRTs are grouped by management unit. They are composed of the mandatory members, as listed in section 55 of the SFDA, plus other members including youth, seniors and women's groups. Meetings are held every three months, for a total of four each year (see Table 4).

In addition, in March 2017, the Cree Nation Government (CNG) set up the integrated resource management table (TGIR) for Category II lands. It is composed of representatives from the CNG and the MRNF, which are exclusive partners, as stated in section 66 of the Agreement on Governance in the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Territory between the Crees of Eeyou Istchee and the Gouvernement du Québec (see Table 4).

Table 4: Local integrated land and resource management panels (TLGIRT) distribution by management unit and total number of meeting held on December 31, 2021

Name of Category III land panel	Management unit	Total number of meeting held on December 31, 2021
EIBJ – Villebois – Valcanton	085-51 ²	20
EIBJ – Waskaganish	085-62	16
EIBJ – Lebel-sur-Quévillon	087-51 ² , 087-62	17
EIBJ – Nemaska	086-63	14
EIBJ – Matagami	086-52 ² , 086-64, 086-65	20
EIBJ – Chapais – Chibougamau	026-64, 026-66	24
EIBJ – Oujé-Bougoumou	026-63	19
EIBJ – Waswanipi	026-65, 086-66, 087-63, 087-64	16
EIBJ – Mistissini	026-61, 026-62	17
Name of Category II land panel	Management unit	Total number of meeting held on December 31, 2021
Mistissini – Waswanipi – Oujé-Bougoumou	026-61, 026-62, 026-63, 026-64, 026-65, 086-65, 086-66, 087-63 & 087-64 (Parts of MUs located on category II lands only)	6

For additional information, please see:

[Panel Guide — MFFP website](#)
[Additional Info — MFFP website](#)

¹ Information sourced from the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government Website. For more details on the list of members of the TLGIRTs on Category III lands, consult the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government website at <https://www.greibj-eijbrg.com/en/territory/tgirt>

² Management units for which the adapted forestry regime (Paix des Braves) does not apply.

4.2 PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS

Section 57 of the *Sustainable Forest Development Act* provides that the integrated forest development plans must be the object of a public consultation. The consultation process and duration, as well as the documents that must be provided with the plans during the consultation, are identified by the Minister in a published manual.

4.2.1 CHANGES TO THE PLANS AND CONSULTATION

A public consultation is also required for any changes or updates to the integrated forest development plans (section 59 of the Act). In these cases, the consultation applies only to the additions and substantial changes to the plans.

Public consultations are also required for special development plans and any changes to them. However, if the Minister believes that a special development plan must be applied urgently, for example if it is needed to avoid deterioration or loss of timber, it is not necessary to hold a public consultation, either for the plan itself or for any changes to it (section 61 of the Act). For additional information, please see the *Public Consultation Manual* (link below).

For additional information, please see:

[Public Consultation Manual](#)

4.3 HARMONIZATION

Harmonization measures may be needed to address the interests, values and needs of the various stakeholders when planning forest development activities. Harmonization measures are actions or decisions that reconcile forest development with the other activities taking place in the forest

The MRNF recognizes two types of harmonization measures:

- Usage harmonization measures
- Operational harmonization measures

Usage harmonization measures are steps recommended by panel participants or participants in public or Indigenous community consultations on the integrated plans, to address issues or concerns that are not generally addressed through local development objectives.¹ The Minister may choose to include all or some of these steps, or may decide not to include them. A usage harmonization measure addresses an issue that affects a potential forest operations zone. It is important to note that the MRNF itself may propose usage harmonization measures.

Among other things, a usage harmonization measure may result in a change to the silvicultural treatment (silvicultural prescription), the boundaries of an operations zone or the location of a main or strategic road infrastructure² to address an issue or concern identified by the panel or by a participant in a public

¹ The Panel Guide defines a local development objective as an action designed to address an issue affecting a set of sites (all the lakes in an area, all the salmon rivers in a region, a specific type of soil, etc.) or a given area (a management unit, a wildlife sanctuary, etc.). An objective may alter the development strategy in order to reconcile forest development activities with other forest uses or functions identified as issues by the panel participants.

² Main or strategic road infrastructures are roads that provide access to worksites. According to the definitions in the *Forest Manual* (2009), these infrastructures are generally primary or secondary road categories.

consultation or an Indigenous community consultation on a forest plan. A measure does not usually change the way in which operations are conducted on a worksite.

The Agreement on the sharing of forest planning and certification roles and responsibilities, entered into in 2013 by the ministry and the Conseil de l'industrie forestière du Québec (CIFQ) and revised in 2015, made the forest industry responsible for operational harmonization in logging sectors intended for supply guarantee holders and sold by the timber marketing board.

Operational harmonization measures are adopted to address concerns about forest development activities on worksites. Concerns of an operational nature are processed by the supply guarantee holders, which are responsible for carrying out the operational harmonization process with the participants concerned, including Indigenous communities,¹ as provided for in the Agreement. Where the concerns relate to non-commercial silvicultural work, operational harmonization measures are processed by the MRNF or by a delegate.

However, for the area covered by the adapted forest regime in the Paix des Braves, harmonization is performed by the joint working groups in a joint process with the Cree tallymen. The guarantee holders are generally required to take part, respond to harmonization requests and, where applicable, carry out operational harmonization measures.

Operational harmonization measures may affect detailed operational timetables, wood transportation, road construction or improvement, the location of an extraction road (on a worksite),² or an aspect of road maintenance.

4.4 INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS

The consultations carried out with the Indigenous communities must be organized in compliance with the rules established by the Supreme Court of Canada concerning the duty of governments to consult and, where applicable, accommodate the Indigenous communities.

The MRNF relies mainly on the *Interim Guide for Consulting the Aboriginal Communities*, which sets out the government's policy in this respect. It provides general guidelines to help operationalize the Québec government's constitutional duty to consult the Indigenous communities, and also clarifies the notion of accommodation that sometimes arises from the duty to consult.

In addition, the MRNF holds separate consultations for Indigenous communities affected by forest plans, as provided for in section 7 of the *Sustainable Forest Development Act*. The purpose of these consultations is to hear the communities' concerns about the potential impacts of the proposed activities for their own subsistence, domestic, ritual or social activities and, where applicable, to accommodate those concerns. The Indigenous communities are also invited to take part in the work of the local integrated land and resource management panels (TLGIRTs).

Consultation rules specific to the Indigenous communities can be established by the communities and the MRNF, and may, among other things, focus on the consultation steps and times, the type of

¹ Under the Forest Planning and Certification Roles and Responsibilities Sharing Agreement, supply guarantee recipients are responsible for developing road infrastructure planning. However, the harmonization of uses associated with the planning of key or strategic road infrastructure remains a departmental responsibility. The Forest Planning and Certification Roles and Responsibilities Sharing Agreement sets out the BGAs' obligations to Indigenous communities, including consultation on the PRAN.

² According to the definitions in the *Forest Manual* (2009), this category tends to group tertiary roads and winter roads.

information to be exchanged, the recommended information exchange methods, the accommodation measures to be applied, and feedback types and methods.

In the case of the Cree communities, the forest development planning process, as well as the participatory, consultation and plan revision phases, are all governed by the adapted forest regime set out in the Agreement Concerning a New Relationship between the Gouvernement du Québec and the Crees of Québec (the *Paix des braves*).

For additional information, please see:

[Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones|Gouvernement du Québec \(quebec.ca\)](#),

“Publications” tab.

[Forest chapter of the Agreement Concerning a New Relationship between the
Gouvernement du Québec and the Crees of Québec](#)

[Interim Guide for Consulting the Aboriginal Communities](#)

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