FOOTHILLS FOREST
A working model of sustainable development in Canadian forest management

Canada's Green Plan for a Healthy Environment includes an important program: Partners in Sustainable Development of Forests. It is designed to support the efforts of Canada's provincial governments and other landowners as they shift the management of Canada's forests from sustained yield to sustainable development.

In the context of the Model Forest Network, sustainable development expands the principle of sustained timber yield to which the Canadian forest community has traditionally been committed. Other forest values including wildlife and fish habitats, genetic diversity, and water resources are also recognized in the management of the resource. This will ensure that the use of the forest today does not compromise prospects for its use by future generations.

The Foothills Forest is one of ten large scale working models across Canada. Together they represent the five major forest ecoregions of Canada. The Model Forest Network will demonstrate how forest ecosystems can be managed in the real world to achieve sustainable development.

The knowledge gained from the Foothills Forest will be shared, through active technology transfer and public awareness programs, with the Model Forest Network, other Canadian forestry operations, local organizations and individuals, and the international community.

The 1218,014 hectare Foothills Forest is located in west central Alberta, in the foothills east of the Rocky Mountains, adajointing the spectacular Jasper National Park. Jasper has been designated as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

Lying within the boreal, subalpine and montane forest regions, the Foothills Forest area has had a highly acclaimed forest management program for over 37 years.

Within the area there are a series of glacial lakes, the only known herd of canyon-dwelling mountain goats in Alberta, caves providing an important winter nursery for bats, and a unique area of active sand dunes that are home to various specialized wildlife communities.

Vertebrate species diversity is rich because the forest covers the transition area from the Rocky Mountains to the boreal forest. In fact, 264 vertebrate species, representing 96 percent of the forest-dwelling species of Alberta, can be found within the Model Forest.
Activities will include research to understand our forests, develop effective forest management strategies and achieve a balance between our economic, cultural and biological values.

The Foothills Forest will also collect information about timber and other forest resources including logging, fisheries and eco-tourism. Research will include studying and documenting the dynamics of ecosystems and wildlife habitat. Experiments will be developed in areas such as advanced harvesting and reforestation techniques and the development of tangible values for landscape aesthetics.

A key project will be the investigation of modified harvesting and reforestation techniques in important wildlife habitat areas. This investigation will include looking at ways to enhance certain forest values for wildlife habitat while harvesting and reforesting in the area.

The Foothills Forest will provide significant economic benefits to the region’s residents.

The Model Forest Network will help protect ecological diversity in Canada.

Better methods for re-growing the forest and understanding a healthy forest supply will be tested.

The Foothills Forest supports a wide variety of winter and summer recreational activities.

The Foothills Forest is being developed and managed with input into the decision-making process from partners within the forest community of this area and throughout Canada.

The Model Forest is sponsored by Wood Assistance Canada Limited, the Alberta Forest Technology School and the Alberta Department of Environmental Protection, Alberta Forest Service and includes the participation of the following partners.