

## Summary of Major Forest Conservation Issues in Northern Alberta

Albertans share a common interest in maintaining forest biodiversity and in ensuring that some areas of wilderness remain in Alberta, as documented in the Alberta Forest Conservation Strategy. The following table illustrates the key issues that need to be addressed for these goals to be achieved, through a comparison of current vs. desired conditions. The "desired status" is derived from the Alberta Forest Conservation Strategy and the scientific literature. The second table summarizes barriers and potential solutions for achieving the required changes.

	<b>Current Status</b>	<b>Desired Status</b>
Industrial Land Base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forestry: sustained-yield management. Over-allocation.</li> <li>• Oil and gas: disturbance of the same magnitude as forestry operations, with no regulation of cumulative landscape-level impacts.</li> <li>• Rapid expansion of road and trail network.</li> <li>• Expansion of the White Zone.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated management of all resource users following the ecosystem-based management approach, including explicit limits to cumulative impacts on forests, waterways, and air.</li> <li>• Special management of rare and endangered species.</li> <li>• Maintenance of the Green Zone land base.</li> </ul>
Protected Areas System	<p>Special Places 2000:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total area insufficient.</li> <li>• Individual sites too small to maintain ecological processes/integrity.</li> <li>• Boundaries of sites based more on industrial commitments than on ecological representation.</li> <li>• No buffers or corridors.</li> </ul>	<p>Functional system of protected areas established and maintained:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sites selected to provide representation, maintain ecological integrity, and preserve wilderness.</li> <li>• Protected areas constitute ~ 20-25% of northern AB.</li> <li>• Buffer and corridor system included in the system.</li> </ul>
Decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key negotiations between government and industry.</li> <li>• Limited public involvement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meaningful public involvement in land-use decision making at the strategic level.</li> </ul>
Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive information on industrial activities and their cumulative impact is unavailable.</li> <li>• Projected effect of industrial activities on biodiversity is unknown.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• System for collecting, summarizing, and disseminating information on industrial activities is established.</li> <li>• System for monitoring changes in forest structure and biodiversity is established.</li> </ul>

	<b>Barrier</b>	<b>Solution</b>
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy bias towards economic development (over short time frames).</li> <li>• Transfer of responsibility for the management and monitoring of public resources to industry.</li> <li>• Lack of accountability, given that most forest management occurs through policy which is neither subject to legislative scrutiny nor open to legal recourse.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure government accountability regarding resource management.</li> <li>• Public lobbying for law reform, including an update of the Forests Act to incorporate the recommendations of the Forest Conservation Strategy.</li> <li>• International pressure on the government to follow through on biodiversity commitments and to bring environmental policy up to U.S. standards.</li> </ul>
Industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on shareholder profit.</li> <li>• Resistant to implementation of environmentally-responsible practices unless there is clear evidence that profit will increase or that the status quo is untenable.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide economic benefits for environmentally-friendly practices and penalties for poor practices, through certification and other market interventions.</li> <li>• Stronger environmental regulation.</li> <li>• Government compensation schemes or land-swaps if required (e.g., for protected areas).</li> <li>• Identify and promote cost-effective environmental practices.</li> </ul>
Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on health care and education. Forests not a priority issue.</li> <li>• Current standard of living in Alberta directly linked to resource industry (esp. oil &amp; gas).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public education regarding the importance of forests, biodiversity, etc.</li> <li>• Motivate and empower individuals and groups that are interested in forestry issues to lobby for change.</li> </ul>
Conservation Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient staff and technical resources relative to the tasks required.</li> <li>• Multiple voices and mandates: susceptible to divide and conquer approach.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased funding for staff and programs, and augmented technical support (e.g., access to data, GIS support, research).</li> <li>• Coalition approach on key issues (Ontario Lands for Life model).</li> <li>• Comprehensive campaign that is well-defined and scientifically defensible.</li> </ul>