

# Timber and Wildlife Management Saskatchewan Forest Habitat Project

FACT SHEET SERIES Volume 5 May 1994



## NEW LOGGING PLAN RESPECTS WILDLIFE

The Saskatchewan Forest Habitat Project has completed Phase One of a new type of timber harvesting plan. The new plan respects the habitat needs of wildlife in the forest.

This initiative is taking place on the Heritage Lake Pilot Area, 10,000 hectares of mixedwood forest near Candle Lake, Saskatchewan. It features three passes of logging, new timber harvesting treatments, and a computerized mapping system that measures and accounts for gains and losses in various wildlife habitats.

According to Brian Christensen, a forest ecologist for Weyerhaeuser Canada, "The first pass of logging was recently completed. It yielded about 80,000 cubic meters of wood. Another pass will be made in 15 to 20 years, and a third in 40 to 50 years."

By following new timber harvest treatments endorsed by the Saskatchewan Forest Habitat Project, and by cutting no more than half of the mature timber in any pass, Christensen expects that wildlife habitats on the Heritage Lake Pilot Area will quickly recover and stabilize after each pass of logging.

Before deciding on a cutting plan, the SFHP partners looked at a number of harvest scenarios. This was done with a computer program that can predict the future

impact of specific logging treatments on wildlife habitat.

The plan they chose promises to satisfy the long-term habitat requirements of five resident wildlife indicator species. Another 200 species of birds and mammals that have similar habitat needs will also be accommodated.

Moose are one of the SFHP's wildlife indicator species. To address their habitat needs, forest planners designed irregular shaped clearcuts no wider than 440 metres. Moose eat hardwood regrowth in these narrow cutovers and seek shelter in mature forest left standing between the har-

vested areas.

Pileated woodpeckers are another indicator species chosen by the SFHP.

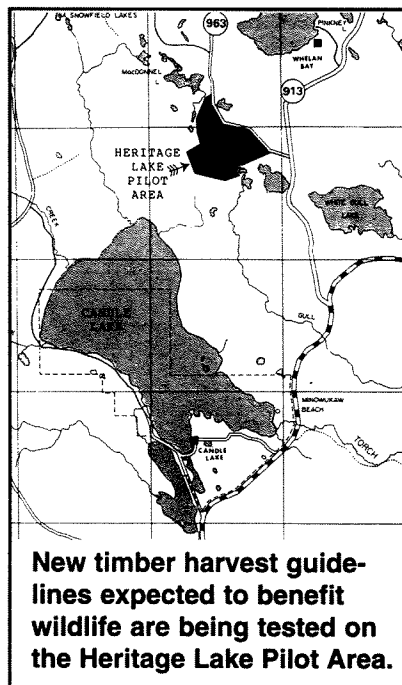
To help supply old trees for pileated woodpeckers, and other cavity-nesting birds of the mature mixedwood forest, timber harvesters were instructed to leave single trees or clumps of aspen standing within cutovers. These trees will someday supply woodpeckers with nesting and feeding sites.

New harvest treatments applied to the Heritage Lake Pilot Area will also enhance the amount of habitat suitable for ovenbirds, snowshoe hare and beaver.

Consideration of wildlife habitat has changed the way trees are harvested.

The size of clearcuts in the Heritage Lake Pilot Area, for example, are more than 50% smaller than ones found in previous logging operations. To provide woodpeckers with more feeding sites, about 1400 tall stumps have been left along the edge of jack pine cutovers. All hawk and eagle nests located prior to logging have been protected.

Beginning in 1995, Weyerhaeuser will implement new timber harvest treatments developed by the SFHP on all its Saskatchewan logging operations.



## THE COSTS OF BETTER FOREST MANAGEMENT

While most people agree that joint timber and wildlife management is a good thing, virtually no one knows what it will cost.

Don Pawson, forest planning manager at the Saskatchewan Division of Weyerhaeuser Canada, says that respecting the habitat needs of wildlife will probably result in higher operating costs.

"When we design irregular shaped, narrow cutblocks that will benefit moose and deer, it takes a lot more time to lay them out on the ground.

"Then there are the extra costs of building and maintaining roads. On average, our cutovers are 50 per cent smaller than they were a few years ago. This means we have to build up to twice as much bush road to harvest the same amount of timber," Pawson says.

Since its inception in 1989, the Saskatchewan Forest Habitat Project (SFHP) has been developing new guidelines for timber harvesting on the Weyerhaeuser FMLA.

These guidelines include such things as leaving large clumps of trees for cavity nesting birds, reducing the size of clearcuts in many areas, and avoiding sensitive spots such as caribou and moose calving habitats and mineral licks. Wetlands and riparian areas used by beaver, other furbearers, and fish also receive protection in these integrated plans.

In a project related to the Saskatchewan Forest Habitat Project, an Ottawa consulting firm has been hired to determine the projected costs of joint timber and wildlife management. In the course of their work they will also determine the benefits to society of more wildlife-friendly timber harvesting plans.



When the weather turns cold, moose stay close to their feeding areas.

## SURVIVING THE WINTER

While we can turn up the furnace and eat indoors, the wildlife in our boreal forests have few such luxuries. Let's look at how some SFHP indicator species survive the winter.

During the coldest periods of a Saskatchewan winter, moose seek protection from the wind and cold by bedding down in dense spruce stands.

Staying close to their winter feeding areas is another way that moose conserve energy. So that moose can bed nearby and eat the food that grows in recently logged cutovers, forest planners must remember to protect some nearby stands of coniferous trees.

The pileated woodpecker is another year-round resident of the boreal forest. This large bird searches out dead and decaying trees wood for carpenter ants and other insects. New timber harvest guidelines, such as leaving tall stumps along the edge of cutovers, may help to provide additional foraging areas for pileated woodpeckers.

The protection of some upland jackpine sites required by woodland caribou in the wintertime is another way that the Saskatchewan Forest Habitat Project is managing the forest for both timber and wildlife.

## PROJECT PARTNERS

- \* Prince Albert National Park
- \* Saskatchewan Division of Weyerhaeuser Canada
- \* Canadian Forest Service of Natural Resources Canada
- \* Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management
- \* Wildlife Habitat Canada
- \* Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation
- \* Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations

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