

ENVIRONMENT 2000 PROGRAM:
ONTARIO REGION, FORESTRY SECTOR
FINAL REPORT

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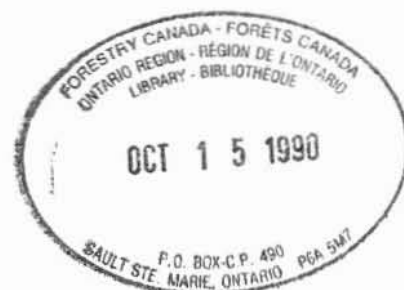
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ABSTRACT

This report describes the Environment 2000 conservation program within the context of the Ontario forestry sector. An overview of program objectives, implementation procedures, and accomplishments is presented along with a discussion of mechanisms that could be improved in future programs of this type.

RÉSUMÉ

Ce rapport décrit le programme de conservation d'Environnement 2000 pour le secteur forestier de l'Ontario. On y présente un aperçu des objectifs, des méthodes d'exécution et des réalisations du programme ainsi qu'une discussion des mécanismes qui pourraient être améliorés si des programmes de ce genre étaient mis en oeuvre.

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INTRODUCTION

During a period of relatively high national unemployment the Environment 2000 Conservation Program appeared to be well received, in general, by sponsoring agencies and community leaders.

The program was formulated shortly after Cabinet approval of a \$400 million federal employment strategy in December, 1983 and was designed to support the four objectives pursued by the Department of the Environment (DOE), namely:

- resource enhancement, conservation, and wise utilization,
- maintenance of environmental quality,
- adaptation of human activities to the natural environment,
- protection and use of the nation's natural and cultural heritage.

Approval for the one-year program was granted by Treasury Board in January, 1984 for implementation in the 1984-1985 fiscal year.

The intent of this report is to provide an overview of the most significant sector of the program (i.e., forestry) within one region (the province of Ontario), to convey the impact of and benefits realized from the numerous projects conducted, and to put forward recommendations for future programs of this type.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

National Program

The specific objectives of the nationwide program, as an integral part of the employment strategy, were to:

- extend and accelerate activities that would contribute to the conservation, preservation, and restoration of the natural environment,
- create employment principally for youth but include provision for hiring some older workers,
- elevate public awareness levels with respect to environmental conservation.

An initial infusion of \$35 million intended for funding some 4600 short-term jobs across the country was augmented by a \$15 million grant from Treasury Board in May, 1984, for a total program budget of \$50 million. The total funding was divided between direct-hire and sponsored projects, with \$27.5 million going to the former and \$22.5 million to the latter. Two-thirds of the total funding allocated to sponsored projects went to the forestry sector (i.e., \$15 million). The Canadian Forestry Service (CFS) received no direct hire funding.

Although the primary mandate of the program was directed towards environmental conservation and awareness initiatives, the employment criteria constituted a fundamental aspect of all projects to be approved. Specific elements of the employment criteria included:

- providing short-term employment for young people aged 16 to 24 and for experienced workers over 50 years of age, with a target "young-to-older worker" ratio of 9:1;
- ensuring that a significant number of workers from traditionally high unemployment target groups such as women, natives, and disabled persons were given opportunities for employment.

National goals were established with respect to under-represented target groups as follows:

- native employment levels would be on a par with local labor market levels,
- disabled people would be hired as the availability and nature of the work permitted.

Remuneration of workers amounted to the higher of the prevailing federal or provincial minimum wage rate, except for supervisors. Supervisors could receive up to double the wage paid to workers provided that the supervisory wage level did not exceed the maximum local wage for that occupation.

Projects eligible for funding were to be directed at conservation-oriented work involving:

- forest renewal and enhancement,
- watercourse restoration or improvement,
- wildlife-habitat improvement,
- parks development,
- other conservation projects.

Eligible sponsors of projects included organizations, community groups, businesses, and individuals. Although federal departments could hire workers within the direct-hire components of the program, they could not directly participate in sponsored projects. Both federal and provincial governments could stimulate proposals and designate an eligible sponsor as the employer. Municipalities were also eligible sponsors provided that the province had no objection.

Ontario Forestry Sector Program

The objectives of the Ontario Region forestry sector program were identical to those of the national program.

Funding allocated for the regional forestry sector program ultimately amounted to \$5,893,813. (This included a series of increments as the program progressed.) In all, 116 projects were originally approved but the number was reduced to 108 as a result of project mergers, withdrawals, or CFS cancellations.

Contracts worth a total of \$6,414,993 were signed because projects tended to finish under budget. Finances for individual projects were monitored continuously for any significant amounts of funding slippage in order that such

funds could be diverted to other projects requiring amendments or to sponsors requesting a second project after the 20-week maximum period for a project had lapsed. A status report generated on a micro-computer (using dBase II) was updated weekly to enable CFS regional staff to manage project funds. The program was administered at the regional level primarily by four Project Officers and a Community Liaison Officer responsible for public awareness of the program in northern Ontario.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Project Approval Process

The approval process involved three levels of assessment to ensure project conformity with program objectives:

- Project Officer and regional establishment (in Ontario, the Great Lakes Forest Research Centre)¹ screening review,
- Regional Assessment Committee review chaired by the Regional Director General of DOE,
- ministerial review, and approval.

A recommendation was made at each stage of assessment, with the Regional Assessment Committee presenting the final recommendation to the Minister by way of the National Program Directorate in Ottawa.

The Ontario Region forestry project proposals were divided into three groups: 1) proposals recommended for funding within the allocation, 2) proposals recommended for funding but for which there were no funds available, and 3) proposals that did not meet the criteria and would not be recommended if additional funds were available. Summaries of proposals contained in categories 1) and 2) were forwarded to the Minister of the Environment for final approval.

Sponsors were notified by letter from the Minister's office if their projects were not approved. The approval process proved to be very time consuming because of the number of review levels. Project proposals that were submitted to the Regional Director General on 15 March 1984 were not approved by the Minister until 10 April 1985. Consequently, a number of proposals, particularly for tree planting, could not be implemented. In some cases, other comparable activities were substituted in consultation with the affected sponsors. For proposals that were not recommended, letters of rejection were forwarded to sponsors by the CFS Regional Director.

¹ Since the Environment 2000 Program was completed, the name of the Great Lakes Forest Research Centre was changed to Great Lakes Forestry Centre. However, for the purposes of this report, the old name will be retained in the text.

Project Financial Control

Financial control of Environment 2000 projects was maintained by means of monthly financial statements submitted by sponsors, and examination of project records by Project Officers in the field. Provision was made for auditing individual projects by the Audit Services Bureau of the Department of Supply and Services; however, the close monitoring by Project Officers precluded the need for such auditing.

Project sponsors were encouraged to utilize bookkeeping forms designed specifically for this program and to maintain a separate bank account unless exemption in writing was received from the CFS Regional Director (in Ontario, the Regional Director of the Great Lakes Forest Research Centre). Many of the larger sponsoring organizations chose to seek this exemption and used their own bookkeeping systems and existing current accounts. Regardless of the bookkeeping system used, sponsors were required to submit interim financial reports, which outlined expenditures for the previous month and the accumulated total to date for each of the expense categories outlined in the project contract. A final report summarizing the total project expenditures by contract category was required at project completion.

Projects were generally visited at least three times. The final visit was usually made after the final report had been received, or in conjunction with its preparation. During project visits, Project Officers verified that:

- all records were being kept up to date and all requirements of the bookkeeping system were in place,
- project expenditures were in accordance with the terms of the contract and invoices and cancelled cheques were kept on file for all expenditures,
- the totals reported in interim and final reports reflected actual project conditions,
- bank reconciliations were carried out,
- the bookkeeper understood and was competent to fulfil the financial requirements of the program.

These items were reported on bookkeeping inspection forms.

The categories on the contractual agreement were the consistent thread throughout the bookkeeping system. If it appeared that a redistribution of funds between categories was required, a Project Officer could use his discretion to approve certain reallocations.

Cash flow to the various projects followed a set of flexible internal guidelines arrived at and modified in cooperation with CFS finance personnel. The basic philosophy was to make contributions to sponsors on a schedule that minimized their financial burden by attempting to regulate contributions by consumption. Close monitoring of project finances by the CFS allowed early determination of surpluses in project commitments that could be reallocated in the

form of new project approvals and extensions, or amendments to existing projects. On the whole, financial control through periodic visits by Project Officers appeared adequate for early detection of bookkeeping problems.

Project Field Monitoring

In conjunction with bookkeeping inspections, and with the same frequency (usually three visits per project), an audit of field activities was made during each project visit. These inspections involved an on-site visit by the Project Officer, usually in the company of the sponsor, an Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR) official, and the project supervisor. Field inspections were designed to address the following concerns:

- Are the project activities in accordance with the work plan described on the contractual agreement? Is the project achieving desired goals?
- Is the amount of work targeted for the project feasible, and will the crew accomplish that amount within the period of the contract?
- How much work in terms of area, trees planted, etc., has the crew completed, and is their productivity satisfactory?
- Are the activities organized and conducted in an efficient manner?
- Is the quality of the work acceptable?
- Are the appropriate safety standards being maintained?

On the basis of field observations, Project Officers often made specific recommendations to sponsors for changing various aspects of projects. In most cases these involved minor modifications of activities or suggestions aimed at increasing productivity; however, a complete revision of a treatment prescription in conjunction with the landowner or his designate occasionally resulted. If conditions were such that the project goals were jeopardized, or if those involved did not conform to project guidelines, the Project Officer could elect, with the approval of the CFS Regional Director, to place a project on "probation" for a specified period of time (21 days) and stipulate criteria to be met during the probationary period. No projects were prematurely terminated under the Ontario Region's Environment 2000 Forestry Sector Program, although the probationary process was used several times.

Project Officers acted in an advisory capacity with respect to setting up the work program and developing project proposals. In most cases project activities were proposed by the landowner or, in the case of projects on provincial crown land, by OMNR. In all, 304 inspections were made during the program.

Communications and Public Awareness

One of the objectives of the program was to provide for increased public awareness of conservation-related and forestry issues. It has been widely recognized that the general public is unaware of many forestry issues and problems facing the country and province today. Only very recently have members of the news media recognized problems that have been perceived by industry and governments for many years.

To fulfil this program objective, four Community Liaison Officers were hired through the direct-hire component of the non-forestry sector of the program. Using a variety of media contacts and other methods, the Community Liaison Officers attempted to ensure that the public was made aware of current environmental concerns and the fact that the federal government was sponsoring activities to alleviate these problems and/or improve the environment through the Environment 2000 program. Each Community Liaison Officer was assigned a specific geographic area in which to operate; Miss Helen Davies was assigned to operate from the Great Lakes Forest Research Centre and promote activities in northern Ontario.

Most of the Community Liaison Officer's time was spent encouraging sponsors to write and submit to local newspapers short articles concerning Environment 2000 activities. He or she also wrote articles for publication, and maintained a clipping file of articles published on forestry projects across the province.

The newspaper was the most widely used medium although 12 confirmed radio and television announcements were made. An open house was held to publicize an Environment 2000 project in Elliot Lake, and similar events were held elsewhere in the province. Generally the contacts made between the Community Liaison Officer and sponsors were by telephone, although most projects received an initial visit from a Community Liaison Officer in order to spark interest in the public awareness program.

Posters and all-weather signs were also produced for the program and distributed to project sponsors. These items had limited visibility in most cases and served as public announcements of a project rather than methods of promoting public awareness of the program's goals. Baseball caps with the program logo were distributed to participants.

Through a telephone survey in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario it was found that one-third of the individuals surveyed had heard of the Environment 2000 program. This was a reasonably good success ratio, particularly for a large center. Quite probably public awareness in the smaller communities would be even better because of greater impact of the program on the local economy and because of the word-of-mouth factor.

In terms of increasing awareness of environmental/forestry issues, the articles and correspondence produced often did not directly address the issues or problems but, rather, focused on the job creation and social aspects of the program. An overview statement of the issues or theory behind program activities was often prepared by the Community Liaison Officer in conjunction with CFS forestry personnel, and could be used as a preamble to published project announcements. In many instances, articles appeared before the Community Liaison Officer made contact with the news media. From a survey of 70 articles related to the program, and published in the news media, only 15% named the CFS as a funding agency, 37% named DOE, 21% simply gave credit to the federal government, 23% mentioned only the Environment 2000 Program as the funding source and 4% gave no credits to any program or agency.

PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The forestry sector program in Ontario created 1315 short-term jobs or the equivalent of 19,020 work weeks of employment from a total program budget of \$5,721,094. Program expenditures were spread over numerous land ownership categories. The heaviest expenditures were directed at provincial crown (40.3% of total) and municipal (22.3% of total) lands mainly because the bulk of project applications dealt with these land ownership classes (Table 1).

Table 1. Program expenditures and work weeks consumed by land ownership category

Land ownership category	Work weeks consumed	Total program expenditures (\$)	% of total	Average total cost per work week (\$)	Average of other costs per work week (\$) ^a
Provincial crown	7,543.7	2,305,550	40.3	305.63	127.03
WIA ^b	390.4	119,227	2.1	305.40	124.28
Municipal	4,362.9	1,276,178	22.3	292.51	112.99
Conservation Authority	1,959.3	618,395	10.8	315.62	139.55
Indian Reserve	1,309.1	358,335	6.2	273.73	94.89
Other federal crown	1,141.0	261,950	4.6	229.58	64.47
Industrial freehold	685.9	225,844	3.9	329.27	144.22
Other private	1,628.2	558,887	9.8	343.25	162.08
Totals	19,020.5	5,724,366	100.0	(Avg) 300.96	(Avg) 122.70

^a not including wages

^b Woodlands Improvement Act agreements

Employment of Target Groups

Operational guidelines for the Environment 2000 program stipulated that only young people between the ages of 16 and 24 and older workers over age 50 were to be hired. This restriction was in line with government objectives of increasing employment opportunities for young and older Canadians. High un-

employment rates in these age classes dictated job allocation targets of 90% for young people and 10% for older people. In addition, a significant number of jobs were targeted in the following proportions for under-represented groups: women 40%, native people 10%, and the disabled 10%.

The Ontario Region forestry sector program created employment for 1315 people, of whom 89.9% (1182) were young and 10.1% (133) were older workers (Fig. 1). Of the 1182 younger workers, 35% (414) were women and, of the older workers, 4.5% (6) were women, for a total of 31.9% (420) female and 68.1% (895) male (Fig. 2).

Native people made up 8.7% (115) of the total employed, and disabled individuals accounted for 1.5% (20) (Fig. 3). The low percentage of disabled youth was due primarily to the nature of forestry work, where full alertness and good physical condition are essential for worker safety. Disabled workers who participated in field activities were closely supervised to ensure that safety standards were met.

Of the supervisory positions, 31.4% (54) were occupied by older workers and 68.6% (118) by young workers. Young women held 15.1% (26) of these positions and older women 1.7% (3) (Fig. 4).



Figure 1. Proportion of young and older workers.

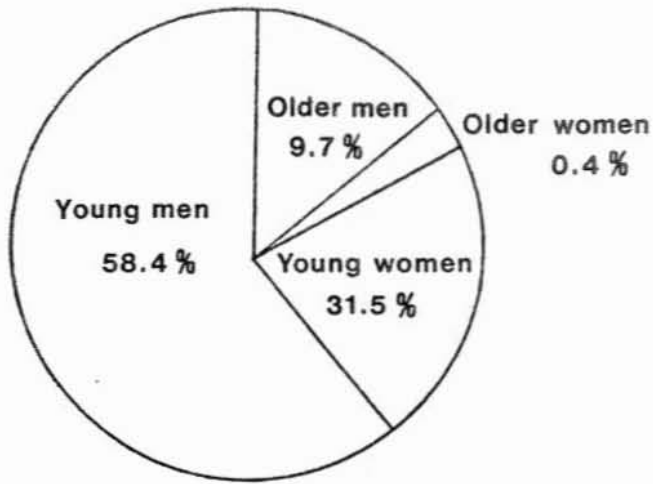


Figure 2. Proportion of young and older men and women.

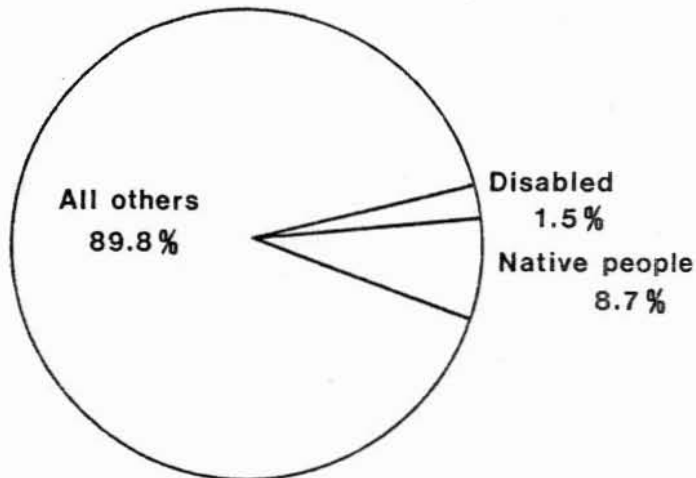


Figure 3. Proportion of native and disabled persons.

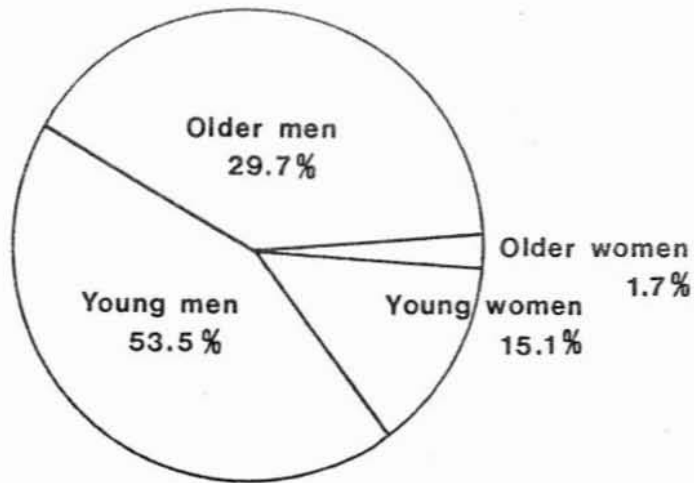


Figure 4. Proportion of supervisory positions (young and older workers).

Impact on the Forestry Sector

The goal of the CFS in administering the Environment 2000 program was to ensure that professionally sound forestry projects (particularly those pertaining to forest renewal and enhancement) be carried out within the guidelines of the program.

The major activity was stand tending. Of the 108 projects that were completed, 75 either were geared exclusively to stand tending or had a substantial stand tending component. Activities that were classed as stand tending are described below. Figure 5 outlines the relative percentage of each activity in relation to the total tending program. Hand or chemical release involved the removal of competing vegetation from areas supporting a desirable regenerating species in order to reduce competition for light and rooting space and thereby enhance the development and growth of the developing forest crop; the designation of "hand" or "chemical" simply indicated the use of manual or chemical means.

Pruning projects involved the removal of tree branches (living or dead) to a specified height in order to reduce the size of the stem's knotty core and thereby increase the amount of clear product obtainable from the tree at harvest. Pruning height was generally to 2.7 m (low pruning) and to 5.1 m (high pruning) as trees matured, with the goal of producing 4.8 m of clear length from the tree at maturity. Pruning may also be done to reduce fire hazard, eradicate or prevent insect infestation or fungal infection, or improve stand aesthetics.

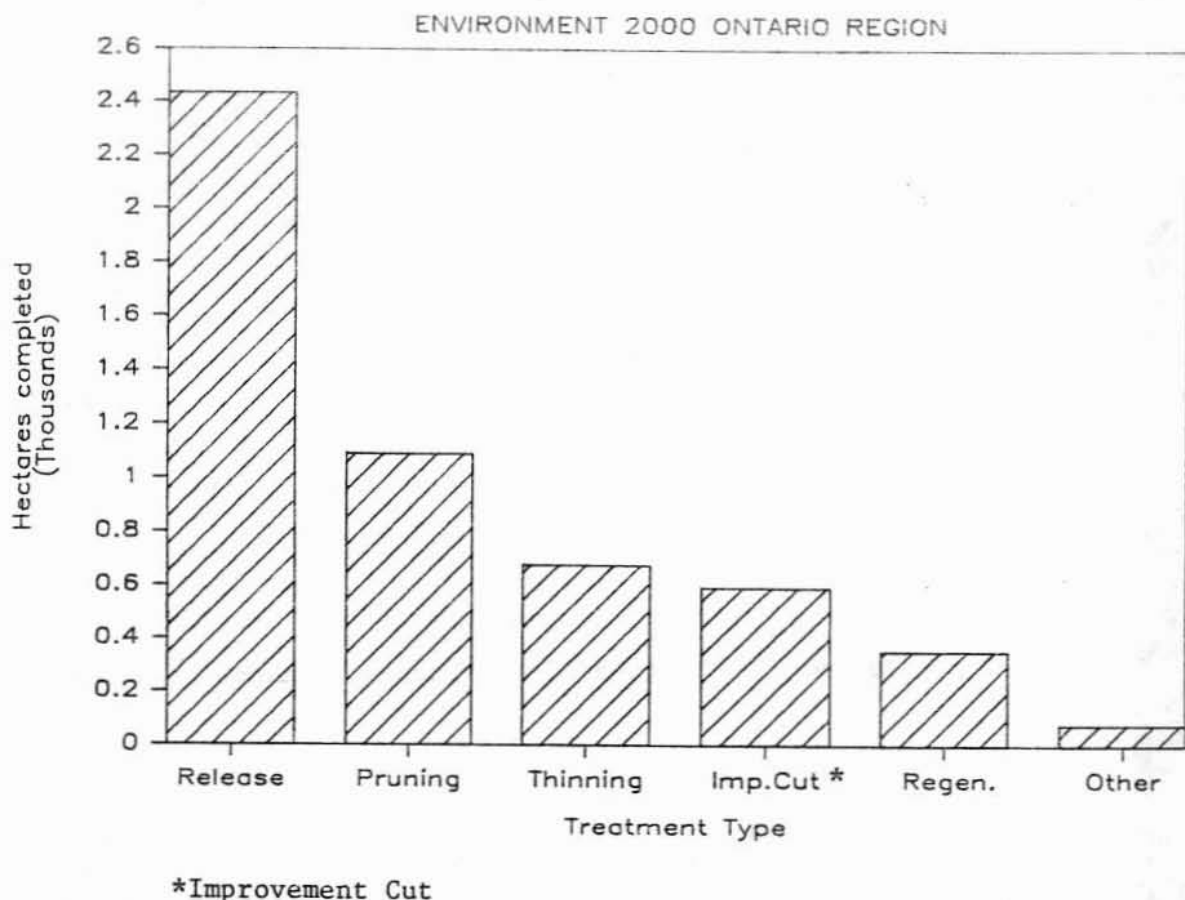


Figure 5. Achievements in forest tending.

Plantation thinning projects involved the removal of a certain percentage of the trees from a stand in order to enhance the growth of the residual crop trees by the reduction of inter-tree competition.

Thinning projects were of a precommercial nature (i.e., the treatment was carried out before the stems reached a size at which any products could be obtained from the thinnings). This treatment is often referred to as juvenile spacing, particularly as it pertains to very young stands.

Stand improvement cutting involved the removal of undesirable trees from a stand in order to enhance the growth of the residual stand and/or to promote regeneration. The term is most often used to refer to treatments in hardwood stands where diseased trees and undesirable species are removed to allow greater growing space for selected crop trees.

Sixteen projects had a significant site preparation component. Site preparation is a broad term referring to the treatment of a tract of land before an artificial regeneration technique is employed or natural regeneration occurs, in order to promote the establishment and growth of the new crop. Site preparation methods included the use of heavy equipment and implements analagous to farm implements, the use of herbicides, and the use of hand implements.

Because most of the Environment 2000 projects were late in starting, the regeneration effort of the program was limited. Approximately 360 ha of land were regenerated under 16 projects with the objective of establishing production forest stands for future harvest. Both nursery and container stock were planted by program participants, and some seeding was done with Cerkon cones (small transparent biodegradable cones used to cover seeds and serve as a miniature greenhouse). There was some planting of root-balled, tall stock and a significant quantity of the nursery stock was planted for aesthetic improvement or windbreak establishment.

Forest inventory work of various types was conducted in 10 projects. Both operational and inventory cruising were performed. The latter occasionally formed the basis for forest management plans, which were also funded through Environment 2000. The inventory techniques used involved the measurement and assessment of forest stands and trees to determine the volume of wood present and the relative potential for conversion into forest products.

Many types of stand projects required advance marking of trees in order to apply the required treatment prescription. Seven projects had substantial tree marking components in their list of activities. Since tree marking involves thorough understanding of treatment prescriptions, this work was most often done by forest technicians or foresters on subcontract.

Because of the labor-intensive aspect of the program, there were only two projects involving road construction. Several projects improved forest access by brushing road right-of-ways.

Boundary lines were cleared in seven projects and firebreaks were constructed or improved in six. Other forest protection work included a research project on pesticide residues, an insect and disease survey in hybrid poplar (*Populus* spp.), branch clipping to eradicate *Gremmeniella* canker (*Gremmeniella abietina* [Lagerb.] Morelet) and branch clipping to eradicate white pine weevil (*Pissodes strobi* Peck) from an infested plantation area.

Additional forestry activities completed during the program included research into the hydroponic growing of tree seedlings, the writing of several forest management plans, and projects geared specifically to increasing public awareness of forestry.

The benefits of most of the forestry activities in terms of increased volume, improved timber quality, and/or shortened rotation may not be fully realized until time of harvest. Short-term benefits include the provision of temporary employment for targeted participant groups, an increase in the public awareness of the forestry sector, and supplementing the constrained budgets of the various government and private organizations that have a mandate for forest management. These programs are also becoming a major component of the work programs undertaken by forestry consulting/contracting firms. While there was no expressed profit incentive in the sponsorship of a project under Environment 2000, there were definite monetary benefits that could accrue to a sponsor depending on the format of the project's contractual agreement. These included:

- a maximum administration allowance of 10% of total wages,
- income from the rental of sponsor-owned equipment to the project,
- provision for paid supervisory or advisory services of the consultant/sponsor,
- specific subcontracts to the consultant/sponsor for associated activities (e.g., writing a forest management plan).

Because the CFS was affiliated with DOE during the major portion of the program, 25 projects with major components of an aesthetic or recreational nature were also administered by the CFS. These projects were concerned primarily with parkland and trail development, land reclamation, and garbage cleanup. The construction of associated structures such as bridges, outhouses, gates, etc., was often included in these projects.

In general, the Environment 2000 program served to create short-term employment, and to channel operational dollars into the forestry sector at a time when that sector was experiencing constraints as a result of a period of severe economic recession.

DISCUSSION

Despite the fact that the Environment 2000 program was implemented, on the whole, with minimal operational problems, there were some unnecessary delays, misunderstandings with sponsors and, generally, management inefficiencies that could be improved upon in future programs of this nature.

Project Approval Process

Significant delays in project approval and startup were experienced at the outset of the program, largely because of the nature of the approval process. All projects required three levels of review: two at the regional level (the Great Lakes Forest Research Centre and the Regional Assessment Committee) and ministerial approval in Ottawa. As a result of this complex review structure, virtually all projects containing a spring tree planting component had to be modified to exclude such work. This was something of an anomaly because the program was initially intended to emphasize forest renewal activities.

Had full authority for project review and approval rested with the Regional Director, including all aspects of funding, negotiation, field evaluation, and audits, unnecessarily lengthy delays would have been avoided.

Project Contracting

The program contracting procedures were sufficiently flexible to permit the adoption, by region, of modified reporting and contract schedule forms. The modification was necessary because it was observed at the outset that the standard national forms package was deficient, particularly in the area of contract detail.

Regions should have been consulted early in the developmental stages of the program with respect to the format for all major contract and report forms to be used. Such consultation would have resulted in a more streamlined forms package at the outset of the program.

The maximum duration of a contract under the program was set at 20 weeks. Because of the nature of forestry work, lengthier projects (i.e., up to 52 weeks) are quite feasible and more desirable for the following reasons:

- Often workers require considerable training and supervision in the safe use of equipment. A lengthier project reduces worker turnover and thus permits increased productivity since workers have gained experience in proper work procedures.
- Higher productivity levels can be expected from experienced workers attracted to a lengthier project. This applies both to supervisors and to silvicultural workers.

Project Funding

The program made provision for workers to be paid the provincial minimum wage and supervisors to receive up to double the minimum wage, provided that the amount did not exceed the prevailing local rate for the position.

In view of the working conditions and the labor-intensive nature of most of the activities conducted under a forestry job creation program, it is felt that a wage somewhat above the minimum wage level should be paid to silvicultural workers. The possession of specific skills or past experience on similar projects should also be factors in calculating the wage to be paid. For example:

<u>Worker Experience Rating</u>	<u>Wage Level</u>
No past experience	Min. wage x 1.3
Some past experience	Min. wage x 1.4
Considerable past experience	Min. wage x 1.5

Target Groups

The major portion of the program was directed at young people, specifically those between the ages of 16 and 24 years inclusive. Age exemptions for supervisors had to receive the approval of the National Program Director in Ottawa.

Many sponsors pointed out that limiting a program to specific age groups is unduly restrictive in terms of filling positions and administering a program. Future programs should be open to workers of any age.

All referrals for the program were to come from local Canada Employment Centres. This essentially had the effect of denying welfare recipients the opportunity to obtain employment on a project. Welfare recipients should be given an equal chance to participate in other programs of this nature.

Public Awareness

The public awareness component of the program proved quite successful, despite the fact that, in numerous press articles, the CFS received no mention other than under the aegis of DOE. Out of 70 articles collected, 30 mentioned both DOE and the CFS, 26 mentioned only DOE, 11 mentioned only the CFS, and three gave no credit whatsoever to the federal agencies involved in the project. Since the continuity of projects and political support granted a federal agency such as the CFS often depend upon the public's knowledge and perception of that agency, benefits both to the public and to the CFS can accrue from accurate media reporting.

If Community Liaison Officers are used to promote awareness of such programs, they should be given a mandate to ensure that the CFS receives some credit in every published article for which they provide information.

At the time of writing of this report, the CFS is no longer under DOE but is part of the Ministry of State (Forestry). This elevated status should ensure that, with any future programs, primary credits will be given to the CFS in the press.

SUMMARY

The Environment 2000 Program has been the second foray by the CFS into direct delivery of job creation programs. (The first was the Unemployment Insurance Job Creation Program-Forestry Sector (UI/JCP-FS) from 1982 to 1984.) The format of Environment 2000, unlike the Section 38 (U.I.C. Act) program format, permitted complete financial control by one federal department (DOE) instead of two separate ones (DOE and CEIC). There appears to be a decided advantage in channeling all program funds through one department rather than having a "joint venture" arrangement. From the standpoint of a project sponsor, all concerns can be addressed through one agency.