



Wild Lands Advocate 10(6): 10, December 2002

Forest Products Association Told to Put Up or Shut Up on Old Growth Strategy

The following letter was sent to Mr. Wayne Thorp, President, Alberta Forest Products Association on September 16, 2002. The AWA also put out a news release.

Dear Mr. Thorp:

RE: Old Growth Strategy

The Alberta Forest Products Association (AFPA) wrote a letter to the National Geographic about a June 2002 article that presented a slamming indictment of Alberta's management of its boreal forests. The AFPA complained that the National Geographic article failed to give readers a balanced reflection of the Alberta forest industry's commitment to the province's boreal forests.

In their letter to National Geographic the AFPA stated that there was "an old growth retention strategy in place." Conservation groups asked the AFPA to explain what that retention strategy is. In July the AFPA indicated it would respond in writing to Albertans for a Wild Chinchaga. Now it seems that you are refusing.

We sincerely ask the AFPA to either put up or shut up on this matter. You can't complain about unfair coverage, citing a document that you refuse to release. We strongly feel that you are taking an ethically bankrupt approach and that the story in the woods is no better.

The only old-growth policy known to us is stated in the Alberta government's Operating Ground Rules. That policy specifies that old-growth be logged first. The provincial operating ground rules do allow for ten per cent of all management units to be retained in mature or overmature forest; however, this may be achieved using "unmerchantable stands, watercourse protection buffers, and other areas not scheduled for harvest." The data shows that this is not enough to meet the needs of all wildlife, especially species like caribou need larger intact areas of old-growth forest if they are to survive, not just the narrow buffers on lakes and streams, or older unmerchantable stands that the forest industry cannot log anyway.

*A recent Alberta Forest Watch survey of the Forest Management Plans of the Alberta forest industry (2001) found that **no** FMA holders in Alberta have old-growth targets of ten per cent for the species they harvest, and that most companies have no defined targets for merchantable old-growth.*

Of all the age classes of forest, old-growth has the highest overall diversity of species, with representation of many rare species such as bay-breasted, Cape May, and black-throated green warblers; winter wren; brown creeper; woodland caribou; and northern flying squirrel. If the biodiversity of our province is to be maintained, substantial areas of old-growth must be maintained.

Conservation groups challenge the AFPA and the Alberta government to explain in writing to the National Geographic and the Alberta public what exactly the old-growth retention strategy is in Alberta.

Yours truly,

Cliff Wallis, AWA President
For CPAWS, FAN, AWC, AWA

(Ed. Note: Mr. Gord Lehn of Spray Lake Sawmills is now president of the Forest Products Association.)

