



Proposed Amendments to Bill 40, *Forests Amendment Act*

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The *Forests Amendment Act*, introduced in October 2020, proposes several amendments to the *Forests Act*. AWA has reviewed the *Forests Amendment Act* and suggests these changes to strengthen the environmental and participatory aspects of managing Alberta's public forests.

These suggestions recognize that the *Forests Act* is a high level principles framework and that underlying regulations are the appropriate level for greater detail.

Preamble – suggested edits to these three Preamble paragraphs are highlighted:

WHEREAS Alberta **is a world leader in** commits to environmentally sustainable forest policies and practices that are grounded in science, **transparency, public and Indigenous participation** and based on the principles and practices of sustainable forest management;

Rationale: A self-congratulatory preamble is inappropriate given many concerns about Alberta forest management, as evidenced by declining biodiversity and species at risk. Principles of transparency and public and Indigenous participation should also be enshrined as important preamble values.

WHEREAS **security of** access to an **environmentally** sustainable timber supply is the basis of the forest industry's **social license and** ability to contribute to Alberta's economic prosperity

Rationale: As drafted, this reinforces the prevailing timber supply centric forest management paradigm, rather than an environmentally sustainable paradigm.

WHEREAS Alberta seeks to manage **climate change** threats to forests **from wildfires and pests**, to find opportunities to reduce risks from wildfires to human life and communities, and to promote healthy ecosystems;

Rationale: Wildfire and native insect disturbances are important natural disturbances for forest renewal and biodiversity; clearcuts are not good ecological proxies for mixed-severity fire regimes and insect disturbance. Instead, setting adequate wetland and riparian harvest buffers, adopting evidence-based structure retention targets within harvest blocks, and limiting wetland desiccation by road and trails, are examples of measures that build diverse-age stands, complex understory habitats supporting biodiversity, and forests that are more resilient to fire and drought than even-age homogeneous stands.





Add these sections in the main body of the Act:

In section 1 'Definitions', add:

Environmentally sustainable: Forest management that maintains forest biodiversity, ecosystem processes and resilience, while natural resources within forests are used by humans in ways and at rates where they are able to replenish themselves.

Add: Environmentally sustainable forest management section

The Minister shall manage for environmentally sustainable timber harvest levels and methods, based upon scientific evidence, recognizing the need to maintain and restore forest soil, water, carbon, and biodiversity values.

Rationale: Confirms in an enforceable section the commitment to environmentally sustainable forest management

Add: Consultation section

The Minister shall provide for meaningful Indigenous consultation and meaningful public participation in forest management, including adequate notice, information and opportunity to comment upon the development and review of:

- forest laws, regulations, standards, and guidelines
- forest management agreements
- forest management plans and
- annual operating plans

Add: Transparency section

The Minister shall provide for widely accessible public reports of:

- Proposed and approved forest management plans, including assessments of vegetation inventory, timber growth and yield, and of harvest scenario impacts upon Indigenous rights, soil, water, carbon, biodiversity and timber values
- Annual operating plans and annual reports of operations

Rationale: Management of public forests requires transparency and accountability. Online posting of approved ten-year forest management plans occurs now, the others are generally never made accessible. Some are only available for paper copy review by those at annual open houses or government offices.

