



News Release: Alberta Increases Annual Timber Harvest by 13%



This week, the Government of Alberta announced that Annual Allowable Cut (AAC) will be increased by up to 13 percent for Alberta's forestry companies. AAC is the amount of timber authorized for harvesting over one year from a defined forest area.

Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) is opposed to this increase, which has the potential to impair forest water and wildlife values for the sake of short-term unsustainable increases in logging rates.

"AAC needs to be determined on a case by case basis to ensure that the increased cut won't negatively impact water quality, drought and flood risks, or wildlife habitat," said Grace Wark, Conservation Specialist. "Alberta forests already have high levels of industrial fragmentation. Provincial regulations generally only require 3-5% retention rates within harvest stands, far below levels for retaining biodiversity. A seemingly arbitrary increase of 13 percent

AAC doesn't align with sustainably managing forests based on their condition."

The announcement was foreshadowed by comments from the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Devin Dreeshen, during the October 2019 budget debates when the Minister hinted towards a 33 percent increase in AAC. AWA wrote to the Minister in December to express concerns and ask for clarification on where this additional cut would come from. The Minister never responded.

"Many of Alberta's forested public lands are at their limits for timber allocation," added Wark. "We're concerned this increase may mean relaxing current regulations, harvesting into current riparian buffers or logging steep or sensitive areas that will be difficult to regenerate. We are also concerned about further habitat degradation for valued wildlife such as old-forest migratory birds, fur-bearers such as martens and fishers, threatened native fish, and woodland caribou heading for extinction without better habitat management."

Part of the government's justification for this increase is to aid in managing mountain pine beetle (MPB) outbreaks. A 2017 assessment of Alberta's mountain pine beetle management [1] found that clear cut harvesting is not as effective for managing MPB compared to targeted detection, selective felling and burning.

For more information contact:

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Reference:

[1] Carroll, A. Seely, B. Welham, C. and Nelson, H. 2017. [Assessing the effectiveness of Alberta's forest management program against mountain pine beetle](#). fRI Research.



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