



NEW SATELLITE-BASED MAPS REVEAL RAPID CHANGES TO NOVA SCOTIA'S FORESTS

EDMONTON, June 25, 2009 – A report of Nova Scotia's forest landscapes, released today by Global Forest Watch Canada, reveals the dramatic pace and scale of recent human-caused changes due to industrial activities in recent decades.

"We examined old and new satellite images for almost all of Nova Scotia and combined what we saw with existing information," says Ryan Cheng, lead author of the report. "What we saw and mapped is an astonishing scale and pace of industrial-caused changes, primarily logging, throughout much of the province since 1990."

The resulting maps and analyses paint a stark picture of industry's impacts on Nova Scotia's forest landscapes.

During the 1990 to 2007 study period, roughly 12% of the province underwent industrial-caused changes. This is approximately twice the rate of similar changes analyzed and mapped in many other Canadian provinces, and totals about the same area as Inverness and Victoria counties combined. Recent anthropogenic change is concentrated in the central portions of the province, with 60% located in the counties of Colchester, Halifax, Cumberland, Pictou, Hants and Guysborough.

Other significant findings for this 1990-2007 period include the following:

- The rate of human-caused forest landscape change on mainland Nova Scotia (0.89% per year) is just under three times the rate of that occurring on Cape Breton Island (0.33% per year).
- The ecoregions with the largest total area of human-caused forest landscape change are the Uplands Ecoregion (26% of all changes) and the Western Ecoregion (24% of all changes).
- Significant amounts of anthropogenic change are occurring in landscapes that are not adequately represented in the Nova Scotia protected areas network.
- Recent (1990-2007) anthropogenic changes are widely distributed throughout Nova Scotia such that the suite of existing protected areas provide major areas of remaining intact forests.

The report notes that Nova Scotia has a wealth of forest resources, and a forest industry that has been key to its economy for centuries. The report makes recommendations that a regular satellite-based change analysis monitoring program be established for the entire province with a focus in and around valued ecosystems such as significant landscapes, sensitive areas important for biodiversity and municipal water supply areas.

Peter Lee, Executive Director of Global Forest Watch Canada, notes, "the preparation and release of this report was triggered by Government of Nova Scotia's current review of its natural resources strategy that may well lay the blueprint to govern future directions for its forests, minerals, parks and biodiversity. As part of this review, it is important that sound, credible, independent and significant information be made available to guide that decision making."

"The human modification of forest landscapes – via road building, logging, mining exploration and development, etc. – is an issue of significance for sustainable forest management. Knowing the locations, concentrations and rates of recently human-disturbed forest areas helps to monitor and thereby improve forest management decisions at multiple scales," concludes Ryan Cheng.

Contact:

Ryan Cheng
Global Forest Watch Canada
780-422-5989

Peter Lee, Executive Director
Global Forest Watch Canada
780-422-5989 or cell 780-914-6241

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Global Forest Watch Canada was formed to provide access to more complete information about development activities in Canada's forests and their environmental impacts. We are convinced that providing rigorous information about Canada's forests will lead to better decision-making on forest management and use, which ultimately will result in forest management regimes that provide a full range of benefits for both present and future generations.