



## ***Analysis of satellite imagery reveals industrial-caused changes to the forests of northern Ontario and potential impacts on woodland caribou***

### **Ontario's forests rapidly changing**

**EDMONTON, March \_\_\_\_, 2007** – The results of a survey of logging, road building and other human disturbances in Ontario's northern forests reveals that the region is being rapidly impacted by logging and associated roads. The study, *Recent Anthropogenic Changes within the Forests of Northern Ontario and Their Potential Impacts on Woodland Caribou*, was undertaken using satellite imagery and analysis and was conducted by Global Forest Watch Canada (GFWC).

The study also looked at the potential impact of these changes on the intact forest habitat required by threatened woodland caribou. "We found that over two-thirds of the study area, which is half of Ontario, was likely no longer suitable for caribou habitation. This has serious implications for the survival of this species within much of Ontario," says Peter Lee, executive director of GFWC.

Knowing the location and, more importantly, the rate of development in our forests can help to improve forest management. In this study, GFWC identified all disturbances to the forests of northern Ontario that were caused by industry in the 1990s and 2000s in a study area that covered almost half of Ontario.

"This is part of one of the largest national projects ever conducted to describe the location and rate of the development of our forests," said Lee, adding that GFWC hopes to expand the project to all of Canada.

Other significant findings of the GFWC study (which can be downloaded on their website, [www.globalforestwatch.ca](http://www.globalforestwatch.ca)) include:

1. *Major cause of change:* The major recent changes consist primarily of clearcut and salvage logging and associated roads.
2. *Area and rate of change: Major area of change:* Changes are concentrated in the area allocated for logging (which comprises approximately 70% of the project area and contains 99.5% of the total changes) in the southern portion of the study area. When ecological buffers that take into account potential impacts on Woodland Caribou were applied, over 90% of the logging exploitation zone was considered to have been impacted by industrial activities.
3. *Forest Management Units (FMUs):* The Dog River-Matewan (managed by Bowater Pulp and Paper Canada Inc.) FMU and Black Sturgeon (managed by Abitibi-Consolidated Inc.) FMU experienced the most dramatic changes over the 1990-2001 period in the project area.
4. *Potential Impact on Woodland Caribou range:*
  - *Short-term impact on Woodland Caribou:* Over one-quarter of the project area may experience woodland caribou avoidance due to changes caused by the logging industry in the 1989-2001 period.
  - *Long-term impact on Woodland Caribou:* Over two-thirds may experience woodland caribou extirpation due to changes caused by the logging industry in the 1989-2001 period.



Photo: Liv Vors

This study raises serious questions about:

- The impact of the rate, scale and distribution of anthropogenic changes on the sustainability of Ontario's forests, especially when an ecological footprint is considered in addition to the physical footprint;
- The sustainability of high conservation value forests within the logging exploitation zone in Ontario's forests; and
- The survivability of Woodland Caribou in and adjacent to the logging exploitation zone.

"Further similar studies should be conducted in broader geographic areas in Canada's southern forests to monitor and quantify the amount, rate and impacts of industrial activities," concludes Peter Lee.

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**For more information:**

The report, *Recent Anthropogenic Changes within the Forests of Northern Ontario and Their Potential Impacts on Woodland Caribou (A Global Forest Watch Canada Report)*, along with maps and data and media briefing materials are available at: [www.globalforestwatch.ca](http://www.globalforestwatch.ca)

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