



New Global Forest Watch satellite data reveals extensive forest loss in Alberta's Eastern Slopes

6.8% of the forests in the Eastern Slopes lost between 2000 and 2013 due to industrialization

Calgary June 26 2014. Industrial developments in Alberta's Eastern Slopes region have resulted in extensive forest loss since 2000, says Global Forest Watch Canada. The analysis was based on new global satellite-based data of forest change developed by the University of Maryland and Google Earth and made available on the World Resources Institute's website that highlights the new international Global Forest Watch initiative (www.globalforestwatch.org).

Peter Lee, Executive Director of Global Forest Watch Canada, said in a speech today to the Alberta Wilderness Association's Fish, Forests, and Flood Resiliency Forum that, "industrialization of Alberta's Eastern Slopes has resulted in extensive forest loss between 2000 and 2012. Although there has been some regrowth following logging, the loss is more than double that of the average throughout Canada's forests and is also significantly greater than in Alberta's tar sands region.

If this new global dataset is accurate, enlightened implementation of Alberta government's pending Southern Alberta Regional Plan, which will replace the Eastern Slopes policy in the south, will be needed to improve this deteriorating situation."

Despite the highest government priority in the management of the Eastern Slopes "placed on watershed management" and "the management of renewable resources is the long-term priority in the Eastern Slopes" (according to the 1984 Eastern Slopes Policy), industrial concessions cover 98% of the forests in the foothills region of the Eastern Slopes. Many areas have more than one industrial concession over the same forest land base.

As a result of a similar analysis throughout Alberta's forest in addition to the Eastern Slopes forests, and using a number of indicators of sustainable forest management, Global Forest Watch Canada gave Alberta a very low score for the state of its forests.

Lee stated: "Out of a possible score of 25, Alberta scored a 5 for the state of its forests, using four criteria:

1. Information (Credible? Free? Readily available?) Score of 'D';
2. Conservation (Concessions to industry versus protection for biodiversity and endangered species? Sterilizing options for biodiversity conservation?) (Score of 'F');
3. Stewardship (Forest lost? Forest gained? Forest degraded? (Score of 'F'), and;
4. First Nations (Cumulative impacts?) (Score of 'F'),

... He concluded: "It would be challenging to achieve a much lower score."

For more information see Peter Lee's presentation "State of Alberta Forests: With A Focus on the Eastern Slopes" at www.globalforestwatch.ca (Email info@globalforestwatch.ca: Tel 780 422 5989)

BACKGROUND: Global Forest Watch (globalforestwatch.org) is a dynamic online forest monitoring and alert system that empowers people everywhere to better manage forests. Global Forest Watch unites satellite technology, open data, and crowdsourcing to guarantee access to timely and reliable information about forests. GFW is free and follows an open data approach in putting decision-relevant information in the hands of governments, companies, NGOs and the public. GFW is supported by a diverse partnership of 40 organizations that contribute data, technical capabilities, funding and expertise. The partnership is convened by the *World Resources Institute*. Partners include: *Google, ESRI, University of Maryland, UNEP, Imazon, Center for Global Development, OSFAC, The Jane Goodall Foundation, ScanEx, Global Forest Watch Canada, Norwegian Ministry of Climate and Environment, USAID, UKAID, The Tilia Fund, SIDA, Bobolink Foundation.*