For nearly 50 years now, the forest inventory division (Direction des inventaires forestiers) of the Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs (MFFP) has conducted a periodic eco-forest inventory on public and private lands in southern Québec. The area surveyed, below the 52nd parallel, covers 588,200 km². The main purpose of the survey is to gather data on Québec's forests and make it publicly available. The inventory data is used to prepare eco-forest maps that show timber stands and their natural environment. Also, periodic inventory allows the MFFP to follow the evolution of Québec's forests over time.

The inventory provides an identification of forest stands and measures their area, age, volume, productivity, strength and quality.

MFFP staff is currently working on the fifth eco-forest inventory. A ten to fifteen year period is required to complete the inventory, roughly 10% of southern Québec being covered every year.
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Each spring, the announcement of the areas that will be visited as part of the MFFP inventory is done in the local newspapers and in radio interviews. In addition, the owners of the woodlots where the inventory will be carried out receive information by mail about the specific measurements that will be taken on their land.

Since it is impossible to measure all the trees of the forest, measurements are made in circular sample plots with a radius of 11.28 meters, located randomly throughout the studied area. Within each plot, the type of forest cover, the mix of species, tree density and tree height are recorded. Subsequently, the data can be extrapolated and used to map the surrounding forest. There are two types of sample plots:

- temporary sample plots (green paint)
- permanent sample plots (yellow paint)

Permanent sample plots are measured every ten to fifteen years. This type of plot provides data on the evolution of the forest over a long time period. The MFFP has a network of 12 000 permanent sample plots located throughout the province.
Temporary sample plots

The trees in a temporary sample plot are measured only once, as the main objective is to calculate the volume of standing timber. The number of temporary sample plots located in a given area varies according to the diversity of forest cover and the type of land ownership (private or public). Since 1970, the MFFP has inventoried over 360,000 temporary sample plots throughout the southern portion of the forested area of Québec.

MFFP forestry technicians, or consulting firms commissioned by the MFFP, take all the measurements required by the technical standards. Many different dendrometric variables (tree species, diameter, height, etc.) and ecological variables (type of surficial deposit, drainage, soil texture, etc.) are measured in each sample plot. Four trees, in a temporary sample plot, and up to nine trees, in a permanent sample plot, are analyzed in more detail. In some cases, a core sample is taken and analyzed in the laboratory. This results in a 5 mm (¼-inch), circular incision in the tree, one meter from ground level, which heals in less than two years and causes no harm to the tree. The tape used to mark trees is biodegradable, and the paint markings (lines and numbers) required for measurement purposes are made as discreetly as possible. Thus, the inventory leaves no mark on the forest over the medium term.
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- **Temporary** sample plots (green paint)
- **Permanent** sample plots (yellow paint)

**Temporary sample plots**

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Once data has been collected from a private woodlot, the technicians place a notice in the centre of the sample plot stating that the inventory has been completed and giving details about the inventory process carried out.

No trees are felled or damaged.

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**Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs**

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