SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT REGULATION

The task of managing the forests sustainably, while allowing present and future generations to take full advantage of their many benefits, will require a number of changes to current forest management methods. The Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs has therefore undertaken to transform the current regulation respecting standards of forest management for forests in the domain of the state into a regulation respecting sustainable forest management.

Changes introduced by the new forest regime

The Sustainable Forest Management Regulation will be a key element in the new forest regime. It will impose a standard code of conduct on every individual and organization working in Québec’s public forests, and will help to achieve sustainable and responsible development. The new regulation will complement the Sustainable Forest Management Strategy by ensuring compliance with many of the Strategy’s objectives. In addition, it constitutes one of the methods chosen by the Ministère to lay the foundations of ecosystem-based development, adjust forest management to regional contexts, and ensure that current forest certification is maintained.
A FOUNDATION BASED ON PARTICIPATORY MANAGEMENT

Public participation is a key element of the sustainable forest management process, which requires economic, social and environmental aspects to be taken into account within a transparent decision-making process.

In the fall of 2010, the population was invited to make comments on the basic elements of the new Sustainable Forest Management Regulation. It will have another opportunity to comment on the draft regulation during the legislative process, when the proposed text is published prior to being finalized.

This is the first time the Ministère has held public consultations and requested input from experts prior to pre-publication of a regulation. Its purpose in doing this was to understand the general public’s concerns and adjust the content of the regulation accordingly.

RESPONSE TO CURRENT ISSUES

Adjustment to specific regional situations

The new Sustainable Forest Management Regulation will set the minimum standards applicable to all public forests in Québec. However, as part of the effort to regionalize forest management, some of its provisions may be adjusted at the regional level to reflect local values. For example, protection measures may be enhanced for a given site or sector of particular interest to a local community.
An approach based on objectives and results

The usual approach to forestry regulations involves the imposition of specific standards for the methods used to achieve a given outcome. Although this may well be the best solution in some cases, to protect and promote the public interest, the new Sustainable Forest Management Regulation will, wherever possible, promote a different approach, based on objectives and results. **This approach will give forest managers and developers more latitude in selecting methods to achieve the regulation’s goals.** It will also help to simplify the regulation. On the other hand, it will also require commitment and accountability from all the actors in the process. The new regulation will be accompanied by a series of guides that will set out techniques and guidelines to help enforce the standards. These tools will be of particular use in helping forest managers to achieve their goals.

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MAIN REGULATORY CHANGES

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In the course of the review process, a number of changes have been made to the standards applicable to Québec’s public forests. These changes include improvements to existing provisions and the introduction of new measures. Generally speaking, they will affect recreation and tourism sites and sectors, structured wildlife areas, wildlife habitats and ecosystem-based management.

Recreation and tourism sectors

First, landscape quality will receive additional protection, to maintain the function of recreation and tourism sites and sectors. These measures will also apply to structured areas offering hunting, fishing and vacation services. The new Sustainable Forest Management Regulation will also include specific provisions for structured areas, to consolidate their use.

Wildlife habitats

Wildlife habitats will also receive particular attention. Special measures will be introduced to govern certain practices in white-tailed deer yards. However, the most notable changes will apply to aquatic, wetland and riparian environments. The regulation will be extended to cover a much broader range of wetlands, and the level of protection will be increased, for example through extensive changes to the standards governing forest roads. This particular reform is a key element of the regulatory review.

The construction of bridges and culverts in the forests will also be subject to more stringent rules. Working methods will be clearly stipulated, to allow for the free movement of fish and to limit impacts on the aquatic environment.

Public participation is a key element of the sustainable forest management process, which requires economic, social and environmental aspects to be taken into account within a transparent decision-making process.
Ecosystem-based management

The new version of the regulation will also contain a series of additional provisions designed to promote ecosystem-based management by setting standards for the spatial distribution of logging sites and residual forest blocks in the mossy spruce domain.

A CONSTANTLY EVOLVING REGULATION

The Government has undertaken to review the regulation periodically, in light of new information and the values expressed by the general public.

A permanent monitoring process, with a consultation component, will be introduced to address this concern. The monitoring mechanism will be designed to provide feedback, and will form part of the Ministère’s effort to introduce adaptive management, acknowledged to be a basic requirement for sustainable forest development and forestry certification. For the general public, the periodic regulatory reviews will guarantee ongoing improvements in the quality of forest-related activities and the level of competency of forestry stakeholders.

IMPLEMENTATION

The new Sustainable Forest Management Regulation is expected to come into force on April 1, 2015. The Regulation respecting standards of forest management for forests in the domain of the State will continue to apply until that time.

For further information on the new Sustainable Forest Management Regulation, please visit the following website:

mrn.gouv.qc.ca/forets/amenagement/amenagement-reglement.jsp

2013 Version