

# Balancing Values in Forest Management

CROWSNEST FMP HARVEST LEVEL REVIEW





West Fraser is developing an updated Forest Management Plan (FMP) for the Crowsnest Forest Management Area to be submitted to the Government of Alberta in Spring 2026. As part of this process, West Fraser is proposing a new allowable annual cut (AAC) of 208,000 cubic metres per year of conifer harvest volume, based on updated forest inventory, stand yield data and timber supply modelling.

While this AAC represents an increase in harvest volume compared to the previous plan, it will not result in an increase in the approved harvest area. The new plan projects an average annual harvest of approximately 900 hectares per year. The previous FMP had an approved harvest level of approximately 1,090 hectares per year. The increase in volume comes from growth of the forest since the last AAC was determined.



Alberta Forest Management Planning Explained

A Forest Management Plan works to balance values in forest management and outlines the location, scale and approach to harvesting in the region. This includes harvest area planning for the next 10 years, as part of the full 200-year longer-term plan described in the FMP, as required under Alberta’s forest management planning standard. The Crowsnest FMP covers an area north of Castle Provincial Park near Crowsnest Pass, extending north to the Kananaskis Country boundary, including Porcupine Hills.

Alberta Allowable Annual Cuts (AACs) Explained

In Alberta, the Government of Alberta oversees the setting and enforcement of allowable annual cuts (AACs). The AAC is a key tool for sustainable forest management, defining the maximum volume of timber that can be harvested each year, on average, from a specific area while maintaining the forest’s long-term health, productivity, biodiversity and a range of other values and uses.

How AACs are Determined in Alberta

Forest companies like West Fraser are required to submit forest management plans to the Government of Alberta every 10 years. It is through this process that the AAC is determined. As forest conditions change and new scientific data become available, the allowable cut is updated — increased, decreased or left unchanged to reflect current conditions and knowledge.

Setting the AAC involves a number of important steps and information sources. Plans are informed by science to support forest health, clean water, wildlife habitats, recreation and a range of social and environmental priorities, aimed at ensuring sustainability and responsible forest management.

This process is intended to ensure the long-term sustainability of timber harvesting while protecting other values.



AACs are Informed by Forest Growth

To assess the forest inventory, Forest Managers obtain data from temporary sample plots and regeneration surveys while also maintaining long-term monitoring programs to understand and describe how the forest is growing — both in mature forest and in young stands. This understanding of how the forest is growing allows us to ensure that harvest levels are sustainable.

Factors That Cause Changes in Timber Supply and AACs

Timber supply and the inputs into an AAC determination evolve over time, reflecting changes on the land base since the last plan and current forest growth and yield data.

- **Improved information**  
New forest inventory and forest growth information reflect changes on the land base since the last plan.
- **Changes in management objectives**  
New objectives for managing the forest resource for timber and non-timber values, including wildlife species and habitats, may change the amount of area available for timber harvesting.
- **Different economic conditions**  
Changes in technology in mills, as well as in forestry field operations, may allow some forest types to be sustainably harvested that were not previously practical.



Changes in Crowsnest FMA Timber Supply

Current data point to an increased timber supply in the Crowsnest FMP, based on the increased yield per stand. This is due to several factors including:

Improved Information

- **Updated forest inventory**  
A new and more accurate forest inventory has been completed, including the use of advanced technologies to better describe the current forest composition.
- **Fire-damaged areas restored**  
In 2005, over 14,000 hectares of land that had recently burned in wildfires were excluded from the productive forest area. These areas have since regrown and are now counted again as contributing forest in the new inventory.
- **Mixed forests count toward timber supply**  
Forest areas with a mix of conifer (evergreen) and deciduous trees are now included in timber supply calculations, whereas some were previously left out.
- **More timber than expected**  
The new measurements show forests are growing better than previously estimated. Timber volume is about 20–30 per cent higher, indicating that stands are producing more wood. As a result, the higher yield per hectare allows the projected harvest volume to be met without increasing the total harvest area compared with the previous plan.
- **Less harvesting than planned**  
Since the last plan was approved, less forest has actually been harvested than expected — about 600 hectares per year compared to the 1,090 hectares allowed. Because of this, there is now more mature forest available, which supports a higher allowable harvest in future planning.

Changes in Management Objectives

- **Updated assumptions about tree regrowth**  
Provincial forest management policies previously required that new harvesting could not occur near previous harvest areas for at least 10 years. This not only limited harvest levels but also led to a high degree of fragmentation at the landscape level. The current approach supports ecosystem-based forest management strategies.
- **Updated forest management practices**  
Since the last plan, Alberta now uses an ecosystem-based approach, allowing for larger, more natural-looking forest patches. This is better for biodiversity and allows for more flexible harvesting.



## Engaging Indigenous Communities and the Public

West Fraser is committed to building meaningful relationships with Indigenous Peoples and communities. Our approach to building relationships includes listening, engaging in dialogue and striving to incorporate traditional knowledge into our forest practices. Indigenous communities have opportunities to be involved throughout the FMP process, contributing knowledge and interests that help shape how forests are managed for a range of values.

Public involvement plays an important role in the sustainability of forests and the communities that depend on them. People living in the area, industry groups and the general public are involved throughout the process and are then invited to review and provide feedback on forest plans. This helps ensure that environmental, social and economic needs are balanced. Plans are made available for public review and input prior to being reviewed and approved by government.



### Next Steps

West Fraser will submit its new Crowsnest Forest Management Plan to the Government of Alberta in Spring 2026. Following this, the Government of Alberta will review it and establish the Crowsnest FMP Annual Allowable Cut (AAC) for the 2025-2035 period.



View our proposed  
Crowsnest FMP

### About West Fraser

West Fraser is a diversified wood products company with more than 50 facilities in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and Europe, which promotes sustainable forest practices in its operations. The Company produces lumber, engineered wood products (OSB, LVL, MDF, plywood and particleboard), pulp, newsprint, wood chips and other residuals.