



Thursday, July 30, 2020

NEW EVIDENCE REVEALS WIDESPREAD DEFORESTATION

Ford government to make situation worse with blind pursuit of red tape reduction

Key Messages:

- **New image catalogue released today shows over 290 sites in Ontario deforested due to roads and landings imposed by forest operations**
- **The satellite images provide additional evidence to support the finding that far from being the exception or limited, deforestation from logging scars is widespread and systemic**
- **These productive forest losses are a startling blind spot in forest management in Ontario with profound implications for climate, renewal of boreal caribou habitat (a threatened species) and long-term sustainable timber supply**
- **Instead of acknowledging the problem, the province has indicated it will double logging and reduce 'red tape'**
- **In early July, Ontario removed key environmental safeguards by exempting forest operations from the *Environmental Assessment Act***
- **Wildlands League is also showcasing the imagery in a new public-friendly GoogleMyMaps viewer that encourages more exploration of these public forests**

TORONTO – As the Ford government recklessly pursues red tape reduction and deregulates forestry to facilitate a doubling of logging in Ontario, a leading conservation group, Wildlands League, is releasing new evidence showing widespread deforestation due to clearcutting practices.

As a follow up to Wildlands' Logging Scars study (Dec. 2019), which provided an in-depth analysis and measurement of the long-term impacts of roads and roadside footprints from 27 clearcut logging sites, the new supplement released today shows similar barren scars across 264 additional sites in the study area.

"Deforestation from industrial forest operations is clearly a widespread and systemic problem in Ontario," Trevor Hesselink, Director of Policy and Research for the group, said.

"We have uncovered a deep and pervasive deforestation problem," says Janet Sumner, Executive Director of Wildlands League. "We want the public to know what's happening in our forests so we've launched a new GoogleMyMaps viewer to make it easy for the public to browse the logging scars for themselves without all the hiking and pedaling Trevor did," Sumner said.

"Ontario's policy regime to date has failed to manage, or even reasonably recognize the magnitude of industry-driven productive forest loss in this large region. Instead it has been effectively blind to this clear sustainability risk to our public forests: logging related deforestation," Hesselink added.

As of July 1, 2020, Ontario's *Environmental Assessment Act* (EAA) no longer applies to forest operations. A permanent exemption from the *Endangered Species Act* (ESA) is under consideration by the government. And, given that forest operations are already exempted from the prohibitions against



WILDLANDS LEAGUE

harming species at risk and their habitats, the *Crown Forest Sustainability Act* (CFSA) will be the primary source of direction for forest management in Ontario.

“The CFSA might have been innovative 25 years ago but in 2020, it’s wholly out of date. It fails to adequately acknowledge deforestation impacts. It also fails Indigenous peoples, endangered species and climate,” Sumner observed.

The group is also releasing a map of the logging scars study sites overlaid on threatened boreal caribou ranges in NW Ontario.

“Many parts of the forest remain barren long after the feller bunchers, trucks and loggers leave. Instead of still just plowing into virgin forests for more 2x4s and toilet paper and leaving wasteful scars behind, it’s well past time we start asking how we can make room for one of the country’s iconic wildlife species?” asks Anna Baggio, Conservation Director for the group.

“Every day it is getting painfully clearer, that industry should no longer be permitted to open up the last remaining intact boreal forests in Canada especially in a climate and biodiversity crisis,” Sumner concludes.

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For more information please contact:

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The full 291 site catalogue, public friendly viewer, map of logging scar sites in caribou ranges, drone footage and much more can be found at <https://loggingscars.ca/>.