

**AF Minister** <AF.Minister@gov.ab.ca>

Wed, Jul 7,  
5:28 PM (7  
days ago)

to me

Mr. Allan Atkinson, Director  
The Society of High Prairie  
Regional Environmental Action Committee (REAC)

Dear Mr. Atkinson:

Thank you for your May 21, 2021, email outlining the concerns of the Society of High Prairie Regional Environmental Action Committee (REAC) with forest management practices in the Slave Lake Forest Area.

The Government of Alberta is committed to ensuring Albertans enjoy multiple values from their renewable forest resources for generations to come. Carefully controlled timber harvesting provides significant economic benefits. It also has fewer negative impacts on the environment than has been experienced from uncontrolled wildfire, which is the natural form of renewal in Alberta's forests.

Forest management plans, and subsequent operational planning, reflect the reality that Alberta's forests have been shaped over millennia by natural disturbances including wildfire, insects, and disease. Forest harvest activities are designed to emulate these natural disturbance patterns, and forest companies generally direct harvest activities at mature stands (roughly 100 years old for conifer and 80 years old for deciduous) as these stands are more susceptible to natural disturbance. In this way, biodiversity is maintained at the landscape level in terms of different age classes of trees. This is important for ensuring a diversity of habitat when managing for other values including wildlife, recreation, and other industrial uses.

All data and evidence suggests that forest harvesting in the Slave Lake area is sustainable and consistent with the principles of sustainable forest management. Alberta's Forest Management Planning Standard defines sustainable forest management as maintaining and enhancing the long-term health of forest ecosystems, while providing ecological, economic, social, and cultural opportunities for the benefit of present and future generations. The province sets the annual allowable cut (AAC), which is the amount of timber that can be harvested on a sustainable basis within a defined forest area. In the Slave Lake Forest Area, harvest levels for coniferous timber have averaged 78 per cent of the approved AAC for the period 2016-2017 through 2019-2020. Deciduous harvest levels over that time have averaged 67 per cent of approved AAC.

On the topic of herbicide usage as part of the reforestation process, glyphosate is one of the approved tools that helps achieve sustainable forest management. Glyphosate reduces competition for newly planted seedlings in harvested areas from grasses and shrubs, and it does not permanently remove vegetation from the landscape. The use of glyphosate removes competition for a brief window that allows newly planted seedlings to grow to a size where they are able to fully access the direct sunlight that is critical to successfully re-establishing healthy, forested landscapes.

Health Canada has carried out science-based re-evaluation of glyphosate to ensure that it continues to meet modern standards for human health and environmental protection. Health Canada has assessed glyphosate to ensure that, when applied according to label specifications and regulations, it does not pose risks of concern to human, animal health, or other forest values. Canada and Alberta have stringent requirements on herbicide use on forested lands including detailed monitoring, reporting, and auditing of results. The province's *Forest Management Herbicide Reference Manual* provides operational requirements that companies must meet in order to use glyphosate on Public Lands in Alberta's Green Area, and it is aligned with the requirements of Health Canada.

I understand REAC began working with staff and the forest industry in Slave Lake to look at the potential for implementing selective logging in 2006. Forest companies agreed that there were some positive benefits from selective logging around retaining older trees, aesthetics, and release of understory. It was also recognized that selective logging can increase harvest costs, the need for more extensive road networks, and the requirements for multiple re-entries into areas prolonging the lifespan of linear disturbances. Taking the positive benefits from selective logging into account, forestry companies support biodiversity, aesthetics and other positive environmental benefits through other approaches, including stand structure retention. Stand structure retention is a requirement for portions of harvested stands to be left unharvested (standing) within cutblocks. It contributes to stand-level biodiversity and ecosystem diversity, manages a broad range of habitats necessary to maintain the natural diversity of species, and provides structural complexity and old growth attributes.

I appreciate your ongoing advocacy on these issues. I encourage REAC to continue its efforts at bringing forward these points for discussion through the established public and First Nations consultation mechanisms that are part of the forest management planning process.

Sincerely,

Honourable Devin Dreeshen  
Minister, Agriculture and Forestry

AR 747123

Classification: Protected A

**From:** Allan Atkinson <[allanatkinson32@gmail.com](mailto:allanatkinson32@gmail.com)>

**Sent:** May 21, 2021 2:44 PM

**To:** [reacplastic@gmail.com](mailto:reacplastic@gmail.com)

**Cc:** [lesserslavelake@forcorp.com](mailto:lesserslavelake@forcorp.com)

**Subject:** REAC opposes current unsustainable forestry practices