

Economic Sustainability



Responsible Forest Stewardship in a Fire-Influenced Landscape



Wildfire has always been part of Saskatchewan's forested landscapes. Over time, fire has shaped how forests grow, renew themselves and support wildlife. Some tree species, such as jack pine and black spruce, rely on fire to regenerate because their cones release seeds only when exposed to heat. Fire can also help sustain wetlands, create wildlife habitat and promote conditions that support natural forest regeneration. For many Indigenous communities, post-fire landscapes and plants such as fireweed have long held cultural meaning, reflecting the cycle of life and continuity on the land.

While fire plays an important role in healthy forest systems, it can also pose serious risks to people, communities, livelihoods and infrastructure. Recent wildfire seasons highlight the scale of wildfire in Saskatchewan. Between 2020 and 2024, approximately 10 per cent of the commercial forest zone burned across more than 1,000 recorded fires. In 2025, nearly 1.9 million hectares were affected, including Timber Supply Areas across the province, particularly in the Prince Albert and North West regions. These experiences underscore the need for a balanced approach to forest management – one that recognizes the natural role of fire while taking deliberate action to protect communities, support forest-based economies and safeguard what matters most.

Saskatchewan's forests are managed using long-term planning approaches that recognize both ecological processes and human needs. Forest Management Plans focus on keeping forests healthy, productive and sustainable, considering forest renewal, wildlife habitat wildfire risk and the stability of forest-based economies. Wildfire is fully accounted for within this planning framework. It is treated as a natural disturbance that influences forest age, composition and structure, while also being a factor that must be actively managed to reduce risk to nearby communities. The planning process includes input from Indigenous communities, industry partners, professional foresters and the public, and plans are reviewed regularly to reflect changing conditions on the landscape. Harvest patterns are designed to reflect natural fire disturbance patterns, helping support wildlife habitat and forest age diversity.

Industry partners and government agencies also play a key role in wildfire preparedness and response. Requirements for prevention planning, fire readiness and co-ordination with emergency response authorities are built into provincial legislation and operating standards. These measures help reduce the likelihood of human-caused fires and improve readiness when fires do occur.

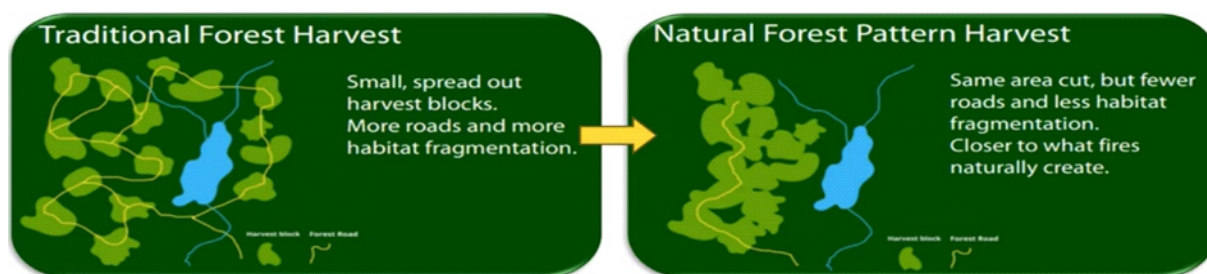
When large wildfires affect significant areas of the timber harvest land base (>10 per cent), additional planning measures are triggered. These include reassessing sustainable harvest levels to ensure long-term forest productivity, conducting detailed post-fire assessments and supporting forest recovery actions where needed. Post-fire work may involve salvage harvesting to remove usable timber in selected areas, followed by reforestation to support site regeneration. Other areas may be left to regenerate naturally, supporting ecological diversity and renewal.

Detailed post-fire inventories are an important part of this work. Using satellite imagery and field assessments, inventory specialists examine burn severity, forest condition and regeneration patterns. This information helps guide future forest management decisions and supports careful stewardship of public forest lands.

Why It Matters

Saskatchewan's forests support jobs, local economies, cultural practices and ecological systems that communities rely on across the province. Thoughtful forest and fire management helps protect lives and property while sustaining healthy forests for the future. By combining long-term planning, science-based decision-making, Indigenous knowledge and practical experience, Saskatchewan is strengthening its ability to manage wildfire risk, support forest-based livelihoods and care for shared landscapes over time. This approach reflects a commitment to stewardship that balances environmental responsibility, community safety and economic stability in a province where people and forests are closely connected.

The Natural Forest Pattern Harvest approach guides harvesting to approximate wildfire patterns, creating a mix of forest ages that supports biodiversity, wildlife habitat and overall forest health.



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