

Forest Type and Age

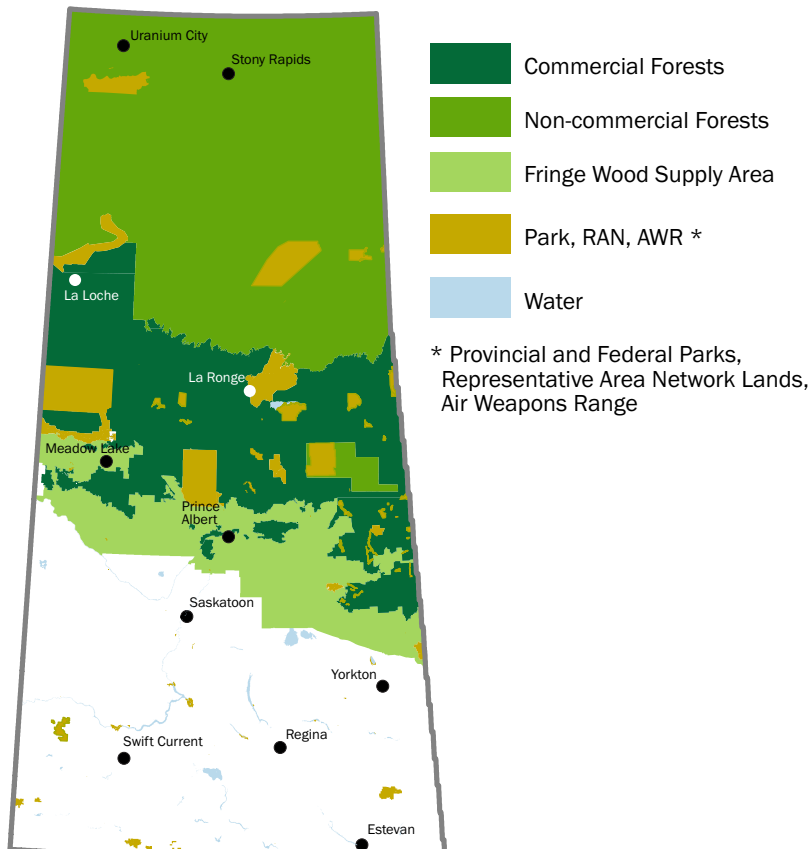
Why it matters

The age of a forest is an important factor to consider, when trying to manage these resources. Animals and plants rely on forests of different ages for habitat. If Saskatchewan has too many young forests, caribou have nowhere to live. If there are too many old forests, the risk of wildfires becomes much higher. Older forests are also much more susceptible to disease. Given these factors, it is important for the Ministry of Environment to carefully monitor forest type and age. Ultimately, our forests must be managed in a way that protects habitat, recreational opportunities and economic growth.



The provincial forest covers the northern half of the province, an area of about 34.3 million hectares, or 53 per cent of the province.

Saskatchewan Forest Zones

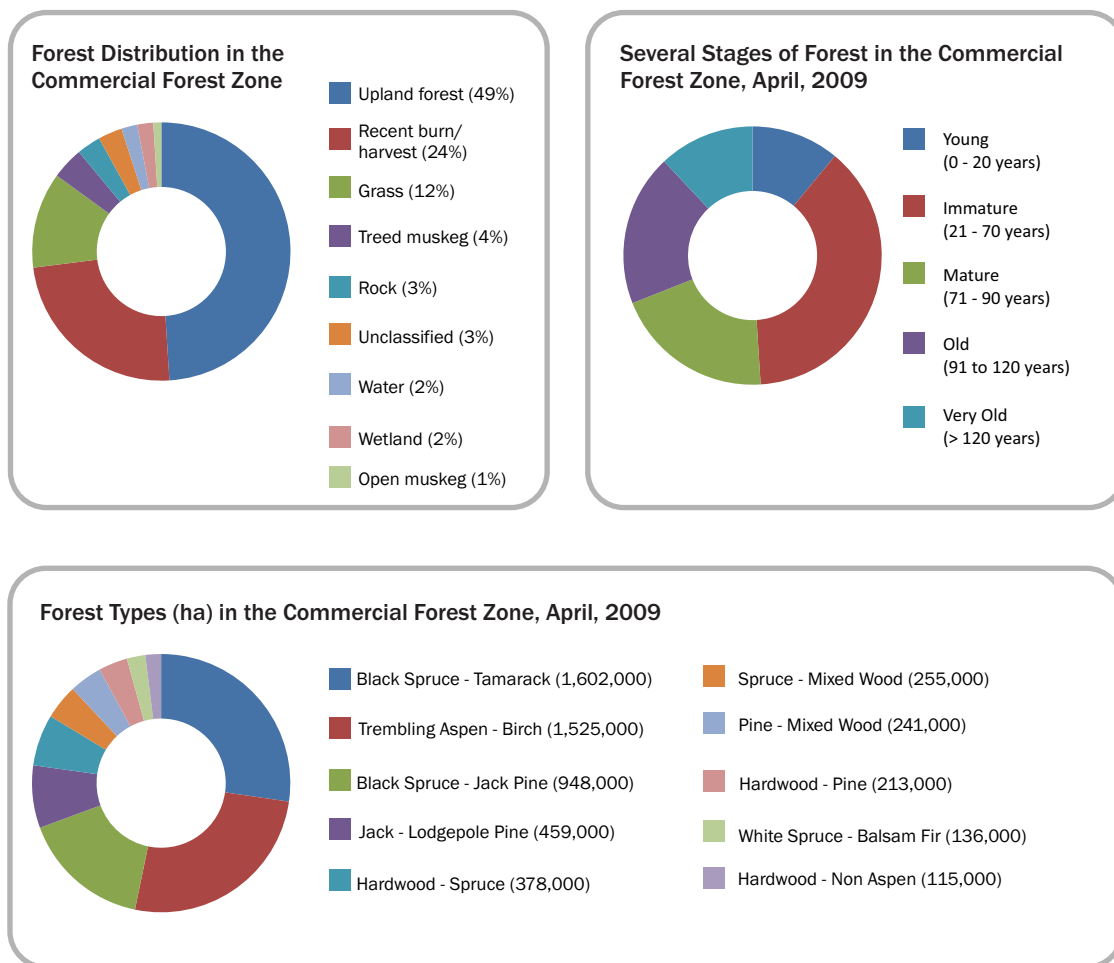


What is happening

Approximately half of the commercial forest zone is upland forest, which is valued for harvesting.

More than half of the commercial forest is classified as mature (70 to 90 years old), old (91 to 120 years old), or very old (120-plus years old). The successful protection of the mature and old forest types at these levels can be attributed to wildfire fighting efforts.

From 2009 to 2014, an estimated 258,000 hectares of forest have been disturbed by wildfire, wind and harvesting. This means that two per cent of the commercial forest moved from an older to a younger classification over that five-year period.



What we are doing

Saskatchewan has developed a tool that can be used to identify the type, extent and condition of vegetation in a forest. The Saskatchewan Forest Vegetation Inventory (SFVI) standard is an effective means of tracking where changes are taking place and what those changes are. These inventories are used by government, forest management agreement holders and other clients. They can be used to refine forest management practices, conduct an analysis of the potential wood supply and to monitor biodiversity. The inventory is also useful for wildlife habitat classification and carbon modelling.

The ultimate goal of these activities is to maintain a forest of varying ages that is both resilient and healthy. The Ministry of Environment is working with other provinces and agencies to establish management targets. These targets will help in maintaining a variety of forest types and the preferred range of forest ages.