Transcript of Canadian Forest Video (3. Min.)

Sustainable managed forests produce stable carbon stocks

Werner Kurz: Canada owns about 10% of the world's forests. Three quarters of our forests are boreal forests and we have a stewardship responsibility to understand how these forests contribute to the global carbon cycle in the exchange of greenhouse gases with the atmosphere.

Dr. Werner Kurz, senior research Scientist, Canadian Forest Service, National Resources Canada.

The research that we are doing with the Canadian Forest Service and in collaboration with provinces and even internationally is aimed at quantifying the contribution of Canada's forests to the global carbon cycle.

One of the differences between managed and natural forests is that in the natural forest carbon is taken up from the atmosphere by trees and recycled back into the atmosphere through decomposition and forest fires.

In the managed forest, we take the wood and the carbon to meet society's needs. A managed landscape tends to store somewhat less carbon than a natural forest landscape, but because it's generally younger forests, that landscape takes up much more carbon from the atmosphere.

Some people argue that we should conserve forests for the sake of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The problem with that argument is that unless we reduce society's needs for timber, fibre and energy, these will have to be met through other means. That means we either go somewhere else to harvest or we use alternative products such as aluminium, steel and concrete to meet these demands and all of these have high fossil fuel emissions associated with them.

Canada has a long history of sustainable forest management and as it turns out, the objectives of sustainable forest management are generally compatible with the objectives of good carbon management.

We have opportunities through the management of forests to increase sinks and reduce sources and we need to explore how we can develop mitigation strategies to help us address global climate change through the management of our forests. One of the goals of sustainable forest management is that we achieve a balance between the amount we harvest every year and the amount that is re-growing every year.

A sustainably managed forest can have stable carbon stocks while at the same time providing, every year; energy, fibre and timber to meet society's needs. That is in the long run how we achieve the greatest mitigation benefit.