

Ministry of Forests: Calculating Carbon Projections

Audit at a glance

Why we did this audit

- Forest management practices can support climate change mitigation by increasing carbon captured and stored by forests and by reducing forestry emissions.
- The Ministry of Forests has committed to enhancing the ability of forests and forest products to absorb and store carbon to help mitigate climate change. The ministry uses carbon modelling to understand how some forest management decisions may change the forest carbon balance.
- A defined methodology for completing carbon modelling helps ensure consistency and transparency. This also helps to ensure their quality and builds confidence in the estimates.

Objective

To determine whether the Ministry of Forests used defined methodologies to calculate consistent and transparent forest carbon projections to inform forest management decisions.

Audit period:

April 1, 2022 –
December 31, 2024

Conclusion

We concluded that the Ministry of Forests did not use defined methodologies to calculate consistent and transparent forest carbon projections to inform forest management decisions.

However, in late 2024 the ministry finalized a methodology to calculate consistent and transparent carbon projections to inform forest landscape plans.

The ministry has accepted both recommendations we made focused on using defined and approved methodologies to calculate consistent and transparent carbon projections.

What we found

No defined methodology for calculating the carbon benefit of forest investments

- The ministry's calculations of the carbon benefit from forest investment projects weren't sufficiently documented to ensure consistency and allow for review or replication.
- Despite the uncertainty regarding the quality of its projections, the ministry publicly and annually reported the carbon benefit from the Forest Investment Program.

Recommendation 1

Gaps in methodology for calculating carbon projections of allowable annual cut

- The ministry produced guidance to support carbon analysis for allowable annual cut determinations.
- The guidance didn't provide a specific approach for calculating the forest carbon impact of harvested wood products.

Recommendation 2

Methodology for calculating carbon projections to inform forest landscape planning recently developed

- The ministry wrote new guidance for calculating carbon information for forest landscape planning during the audit period.
- The guidance contained a defined methodology to ensure consistent and transparent projections. The ministry approved it for use in late-2024.