

Sudbury Forest Aerial Vegetation Management 2026-2027

Annual Work Schedule Fact Sheet

Introduction

- The Vermilion Forest Management Company Ltd. (VFM) holds the Sustainable Forest License to manage the public lands on the Sudbury Forest Management Unit.
- The core objective is to maintain and enhance the long-term health and productivity of the Sudbury Forest, while providing environmental, economic, social, and cultural opportunities for the benefit of present and future generations.
- VFM has a legal responsibility to renew harvested areas of the Sudbury Forest and ensure they meet regeneration standards established through the Forest Management Plan.

VFM Ltd. is the primary steward of forest renewal and health following the removal of trees either by harvest or natural disturbances from public lands. This includes site preparation, regeneration, and taking care of forest growth for many years following initial management of the area.

Who is responsible for the approval and regulation of herbicides in forestry?

- In Ontario, the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) regulates herbicide application under the Pesticides Act and Ontario Regulation 63/09.
- Before any herbicide can be approved for use in Ontario, it must first be registered federally by Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) under the Pest Control Products Act.
- Health Canada's PMRA is responsible for conducting scientific evaluations of herbicide products to assess their safety for human health and the environment. Products are reviewed periodically to ensure they continue to meet current safety standards.

Herbicide use is governed by a multi-level regulatory framework.

Sudbury Forest Key Facts – Annual Averages

- Total of 470,475 hectares (ha) of Crown Forest Area
- 1,616 hectares harvested (5-year average)
- 582, 136 trees planted (5-year average)
- 1,000 hectares treated by aerial application of herbicides (5-year average)
 - 0.21% of total Crown Forest Area

Less than 0.5% of the forest is treated with aerial application of herbicides in any given year.

Where treatments may occur (2026)

VFM Ltd. only applies aerial herbicide treatments on Crown managed forests. Approximately 1,400 hectares are planned for aerial herbicide treatment in 2026. Treatments may occur in selected areas within the townships of: Fraleck, Frechette, Hutton, Lampman, McNamara, Morgan/Levack and Parkin.

An overview map is available for review online every year on or about July 20th on the Natural Resources Information Portal at https://nrip.mnr.gov.on.ca/s/published-submission?language=en_US&recordId=a0zOM00000EPeDVYA1 or for more detailed block maps: <https://www.sudburyforest.com/>

Only specific sites within Crown managed forests and within these townships are treated, not entire townships.

Public and Indigenous Notices

- The MNR issues all public and Indigenous notices.
- The MNR issues 30-day and 7-day notices prior to the scheduled date of application to advise the public and Indigenous communities that the approved project plan and description are available for inspection. For aerial herbicide, a direct written notice is provided at least 30 days before the anticipated date of application to landowners or occupants within 500 metres of the proposed treatment area.
- VFM posts road signage not more than seven days before operations are scheduled to begin. Signs are posted at all reasonable points of access. The signs will indicate the scheduled date of spraying, the pesticide to be used, the date when berries can again be consumed, and the contact information of a contact person who can provide more information.

Why Vegetation Management Is Used

- Without intervention, many areas will not return to conifer forest.
- After harvest or natural disturbance, many conifer sites, either natural or planted, are outcompeted by fast-growing hardwoods and shrubs making it difficult to achieve planned conifer regeneration objectives.
- As not all sites are plantable, natural regeneration remains a significant and important part of forest renewal on the Sudbury Forest.
- Vegetation management supports a balanced forest that contributes to long-term sustainability, habitat, biodiversity, supports forest-based communities and industries, and helps maintain the range of forest conditions described in the Forest Management Plan.

Decisions Are Made via “Judicious Use”

Herbicide use is considered only after assessing:

- Manual tending
- Mechanical treatments
- Prescribed fire
- A chosen silvicultural tool used only where it makes ecological sense to maintain and/or enhance the mixed conifer component on the landscape.

Herbicides are used only when other methods are not effective or practical.

Goal

- Maintain a diverse and sustainable forest
- Support long-term forest health
- Prepare for and/or support the establishment and maintenance of young conifer trees, both naturally regenerating and planted
- Reduce competition from fast-growing vegetation

The goal is healthy forest regeneration — not widespread spraying.

How Application Is Done

- Low application rates with high volume of water (e.g., 3.7 L of herbicide mixed with 46 L of water per hectare)
- Targeted, site-specific treatments
- Technology used to minimize drift
- Sensitive areas identified and protected
- Temperature, humidity, and wind speed values are monitored and recorded every 15 minutes.

Application is precise, controlled, monitored, and limited.

Oversight and Safeguards

- Reviewed and approved by Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR)
- Reviewed and approved by Ministry of the Environment (MECP)
- Conducted under strict provincial and federal regulations
- Helicopter boom-on and boom-off files are reviewed regularly during the program and utilized to ensure compliance.
- Monitoring programs assess effectiveness

Multiple layers of oversight are in place.

Use Is Limited

- Only a small fraction of the forest is treated annually
- Sites are carefully selected based on need
- Opportunities to reduce treatment areas are considered

Each site is assessed individually — not all areas are treated.

Does herbicide use increase wildfires by producing pure conifer forests?

- Conifer forests are not only important for commercial forest products. All tree species growing on the Sudbury Forest are ecologically, economically, and socially important
- There are a variety of forest types around spray blocks (Hardwoods that provide natural fire breaks)
- Hardwood species and some woody shrubs resprout after spraying and remain part of the new forest into the future

Why did Quebec ban herbicide use in forestry and Ontario ban it for cosmetic use?

- The decision not to spray in Quebec forests was political, not science-based
- Since the 2000 decision, conifer regeneration in Quebec has not been as successful as it needs to be to maintain their conifer Annual Allowable Cut (AAC).
- After the decision to ban silvicultural herbicide use, Quebec reduced its conifer AAC. Conifer stands were failing to meet their standards with non-herbicide alternatives (i.e. brush sawing).
- Forest herbicides are used to meet very specific silvicultural objectives and cannot be conceived as “cosmetic” and, as such, are specifically excluded from the ban on “cosmetic” pesticides in Ontario. The provincial ban on cosmetic pesticides in Ontario was invoked in part to supersede a diverse set of bylaws that were being implemented by various municipalities and provide a single, clearer set of rules.

Honeybees

- Herbicides used in forestry are designed to affect specific processes in plants and are not intended to target insects or pollinators. Health Canada evaluates potential risks to pollinators as part of the registration process.

Looking ahead

- Alternatives continue to be explored
- Monitoring informs future decisions

The long-term goal is to reduce reliance where possible.

For more information

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<https://www.Sudburyforest.com/herbicide>