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MANITOBA MODEL FOREST  
P.O. BOX 10  
PINE FALLS, MB R0E 1M0

**FOREST FIRE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY  
WORKSHOP REPORT**

**PROJECT 93-2-15**

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## Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
1.0 Introduction .....	1
1.1 Project Background Situation .....	1
1.2 The Role of Manitoba's Model Forest in Fire Management Strategy Development .....	2
1.3 Opportunity and Purpose of this Workshop .....	2
1.4 The Present Situation : Responsibility for Fire Management in the Model Forest .....	2
1.5 Towards Developing a Model Forest Fire Management Strategy .....	3
2.0 Workshop Planning .....	4
2.1 Participation Priorities .....	5
2.2 Organization of the Workshop .....	7
3.0 Workshop Discussion .....	8
3.1 Values at Risk .....	8
3.2 Classification of the Fire Management Process .....	9
4.0 Summary and Recommendation .....	12
5.0 Response and Comments from stakeholders .....	13

## APPENDICES

**MANITOBA MODEL FOREST**

**Forest Fire Management Strategy**

**Workshop Report, February 22, 1994**

**(Contract 93-2-15)**

**Submitted by**

**Synthen Resources Limited  
101 Eleven Evergreen Place  
Winnipeg, MB R3L 2T9**

**March, 1994**

## **MANITOBA MODEL FOREST**

### **Workshop on Forest Fire Management Strategy**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

##### **1.1 Project Background Situation**

Many Model Forest stakeholders have a vested interest in the control of forest fires in the Model Forest region. This interest has been enhanced during the decade of the 1980s, during which time an extraordinary amount of forest resource has been decimated by forest fires. While this may have been an unusual situation, there is no reason why it may not re-occur. It is clearly essential that the resources and technical capability are present in a ready situation to address the onset of forest fire when indications are that the probability of fire is enhanced by environmental and climatological factors.

The issue of forest fire management and control has been identified by all of the program components of the Manitoba Model Forest as being a matter of highest priority. The purpose of this workshop session was, accordingly, to discuss and identify what, from a stakeholders point of view, are the priorities insofar as forest fire management is concerned. Where are the values at risk? Who are the potential losers? What are the appropriate responses from those charged with responsibility for fire management and control? Where lie the priorities? Who are the stakeholders and what are their interests?

Beyond identifying these issues, the purpose of this workshop was to elicit from the stakeholders answers to these questions so that they would have a better understanding of fire management activities in the Model Forest.

## **1.2 The Role of Manitoba's Model Forest in Fire Management Strategy Development**

The issue of fire management strategy development was identified as a priority in the 1993/94 Model Forest work program and a comprehensive proposal was submitted to the Model Forest led by Manitoba Natural Resources with various stakeholders (Abitibi Price, NESDA, etc.), as partners and supporters of the proposal. The proposal was well received by the Model Forest Board and management.

Given the complexity of the original proposal, the Model Forest Board and management has now suggested a modified approach towards this proposal. The priority now is to obtain input from all stakeholders with respect to what they perceive to be the main issues, questions and priorities in fire management from their point of view. To gain these insights, it was felt that a workshop of invited stakeholders would be the best way of obtaining this information and be the best way for the Model Forest to plan an effective program in support of MNR over the next two or three years.

## **1.3 Opportunity and Purpose of this Workshop**

Fire is manageable to a considerable extent through strategic planning and maintaining an adequate state of preparedness in the region. The primary purpose of this workshop was to solicit the input of the region's stakeholders to identify their wants and needs from fire management programming within the Model Forest.

## **1.4 The Present Situation : Responsibility for Fire Management in the Model Forest**

Primary responsibility for forest fire management rests with Manitoba Natural Resources under the Fires Prevention Act. This agency takes the lead in planning for, detecting, mobilizing resources and suppressing forest fires in the Model Forest and in the rest of the province. The lead role of MNR is supported by various interests in the Model Forest, notably Abitibi Price, the various communities and municipalities, NESDA, and recreational interests such as cottage owners, tourists and park visitors. These various interests are being combined into a partnership through this workshop to support MNR's objective of designing and implementing

a model fire management strategy for the Model Forest region.

Under the legal authority of the Fire Prevention Act, it is the policy of MNR to:

prevent the occurrence of wildfire as far as humanly possible and to be prepared to efficiently discover and deal with any such fire with the least possible loss in human lives, private and public values.

As basics to the achievement to the policy statement the following standards have been established:

1. All employees of Manitoba Natural Resources are obligated and share in the responsibility for the prevention of wildfires.
2. Upon report of any wildfire, planning and execution of initial attack will supercede all other duties or activities except those which will immediately save human life.
3. All wildfires will be brought into a state of "under control" or "being held" before the start of the next burning period. If this goal is not achieved, a report explaining the delay must be submitted to the Regional Director or his designate by 12:00 hours the day following the detection report.
4. Wildfire must be classed as "under control" before any demobilization of suppression forces occurs. Exception to this is when action must be taken on a higher priority fire and additional forces are not immediately available.
5. No wildfire will be abandoned without prior consultation and agreement from a higher authority.

### **1.5 Towards Developing a Model Forest Fire Management Strategy**

Logically, designing a comprehensive fire management strategy involves several steps. These

include:

1. establishing the statistical and descriptive data base required to understand forest fire, its history in the region and factors which influence its behaviour; a considerable base of historical and statistical data has been assembled in this regard (see, for example the following three pages);
2. understanding and documenting the forest resource and its values to users and stakeholders, i.e., determining what are the values at risk;
3. evaluating existing plans, approaches and capabilities for forest fire management;
4. identifying opportunities and capabilities for enhancing current approaches and existing programs; and
5. incorporating and applying these advances in a fire management strategy which could be used as a model in other regions of the province.

These planning principles were adopted as a guide to the discussion during the workshop.

## **2.0 Workshop Planning**

A project Steering Committee consisting of Bill Medd, Peter Konopelny, Jim Martinuk and Bob Durocher, facilitated by Peter Ashton was constituted as the advisory body to guide and advise on the planning of this workshop.

# Model Forest Fire Stats 1968 - 1990

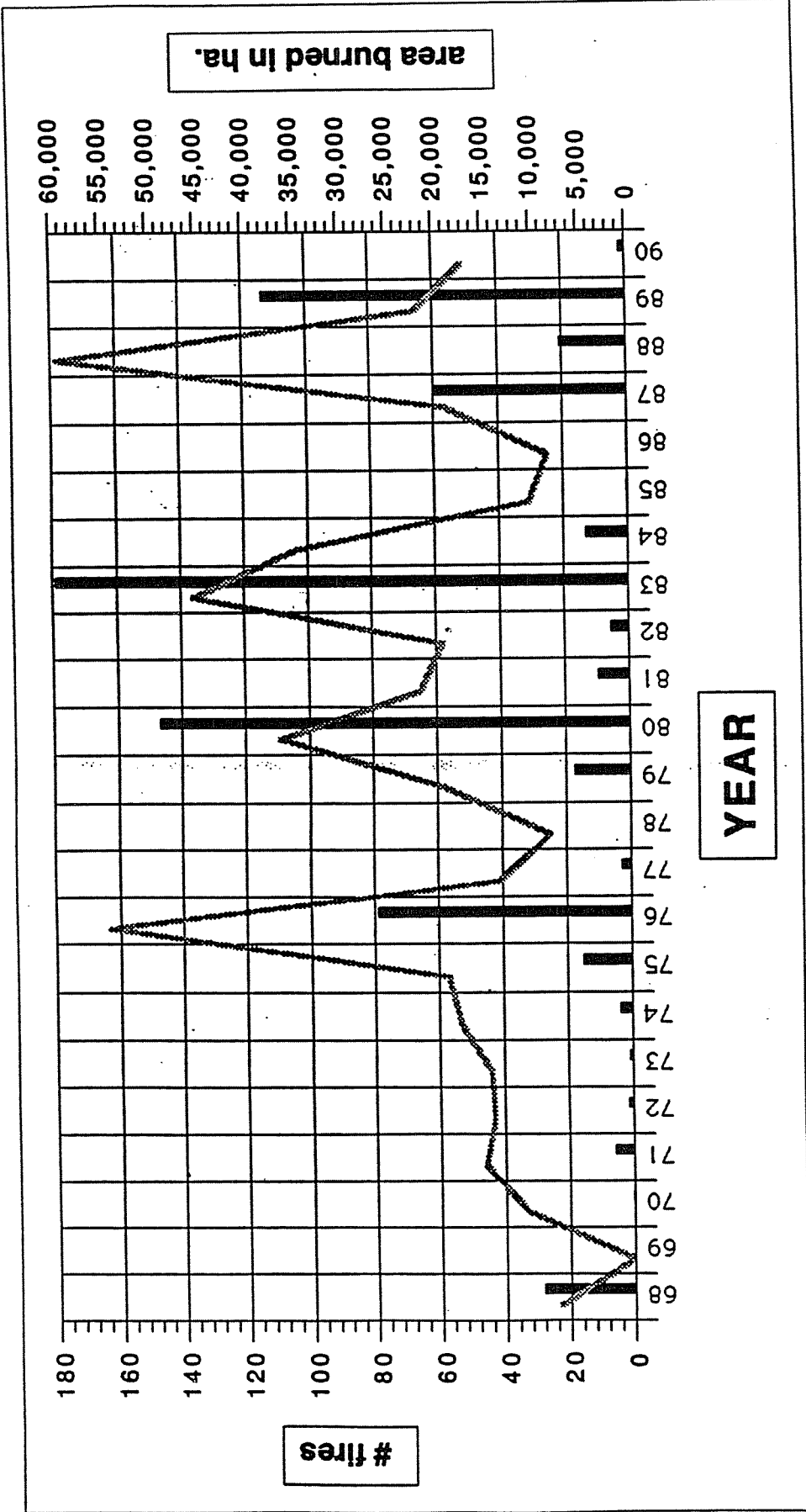
	# fires	% of total fires	ha. burned	% of total ha burned
less than 1 hectare	939	64.1%	290.9	0.12%
1.1-10 hectares	311	21.2%	1,013.4	0.43%
10.1 -100 hectares	122	8.3%	4,036.5	1.72%
100.1-1000 hectares	69	4.7%	22,626.8	9.64%
1000 + hectares	25	1.7%	206,702.3	88.08%
<b>total</b>	<b>1466</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>234,669.9</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

avg fires/year	64
----------------	----

avg size (ha.)	160
----------------	-----

**Source:** 1968 - 1990 Wildfire Reports  
**Criteria:** north lat <= 51.3  
 south lat >= 50.1 note area south of Wpg. R. & east of Seven Sisters is not included  
 east long <= 95  
 west long >= 96.6

# Fires in the Model Forest 1968 - 1990



# fires  
 area burned in ha.

**Source:** 1968 - 1990 Wildfire Reports  
**Criteria:** north lat <= 51.3  
 south lat >= 50.1 note area south of Wpg. R. & east of Seven Sisters is not included  
 east long <= 95  
 west long >= 96.6

Year	# fires	area ha
68	23	9,468.1
69	0	0.0
70	33	86.3
71	46	1,956.7
72	43	437.0
73	44	325.7
74	53	1,241.4
75	57	5,027.6
76	163	26,286.5
77	41	953.7
78	25	14.0
79	58	5,738.5
80	109	48,915.3
81	65	3,200.9
82	58	1,836.6
83	136	59,589.8
84	104	4,329.0
85	31	50.2
86	25	7.4
87	57	19,887.2
88	178	6,889.7
89	66	37,835.0
90	51	593.3
total	1466	234,669.9

Source: 1968 - 1990 Wildfire Reports  
Criteria: north lat  $\leq$  51.3  
south lat  $\geq$  50.1 note area south of Wpg. R. & east of Seven Sisters is not included  
east long  $\leq$  95  
west long  $\geq$  96.6

The work of this Steering Committee involved:

- several meetings to determine:
  - type and number of participants to be invited;
  - location and timing of workshop;
  - review and critique invitation package (personalized letter, workshop agenda and background document) prepared by the consultant;
  - logistics for organizing and facilitating the workshop.

Agreement was reached on all these topics.

- an invitation list was compiled (names, affiliations, addresses and phone numbers) for a total of 56 potential participants
- personalized letters were prepared and all background information duplicated
- packages were mailed to all names on the list on January 22, 1994
- confirmations of attendance were received and recorded

The workshop was originally planned to be held at the Manitou Lodge. This was changed subsequently due to mill requirements and all attendees were advised by telephone of this change.

## **2.1 Participation Priorities**

During their deliberations, the Steering Committee felt it to be most important to obtain broad cross sectional representation at this workshop. The group wanted to emphasize the need to hear from stakeholders as to what they felt to be priority issues in fire management planning rather than hear solely from MNR as to what are current operational procedures. Discussions among the Steering Committee identified the following types of stakeholders who

should be invited to attend as having a particular concern in fire management in the Model Forest:

#### Rural Municipalities and Local Government Districts

- RM of St. Clements
- RM of Lac du Bonnet
- RM of Brokenhead
- RM of Victoria Beach
- LGD of Pinawa
- LGD of Alexander
- Village of Powerview/Pine Falls
- LGD of Lac du Bonnet

#### Cottage Associations

- Nopiming
- English Lake
- Wanipigow
- Wallace Lake
- Beresford Lake

#### Representatives from each branch of MNR

- Fisheries
- Parks
- Forestry
- Lands
- District NROs
- Integrated Resource Management Team

#### Aboriginal Communities

- Sagkeeng
- Little Black River
- Hollow Water
- Brokenhead

#### Other

- Snowmobile Clubs
- Northeast Sustainable Development Association (NESDA)
- Manitoba Trappers Association
- Woodlot Association of Manitoba
- Forestry Canada - Kelvin Hirsch (Edmonton)
- Forestry Canada - Doug Pronger
- Manitoba Naturalists Society
- Wildlife Associations
- Manitoba Eco Network
- Manitoba Wild Rice Association
- Lodges and Outfitters

Representatives of all these groups were invited by letter (see Appendix C).

## 2.2 Organization of the Workshop

As emphasized previously, the purpose of this workshop was to hear the thoughts and obtain input of stakeholders in the Model Forest with respect to development of a fire management strategy. Participants were encouraged to speak up with their own suggestions rather than criticize the way fire is currently being managed.

By way of introduction, however, it was felt that an orientation to fire management procedures would be a useful way to commence the workshop and the project as a whole. The workshop agenda (Appendix D) lays out how the day's objectives were planned to be met. In fact, due to a relatively poor turn out (25 people), rather more time was spent speaking to the group rather than vice versa. In addition, it was felt that the small numbers did not warrant dividing the group into two working groups as had originally been contemplated.

Other adjustments to the agenda included brief presentations by additional members of the Steering Committee on their topics of expertise including:

- |                 |   |  |
|-----------------|---|--|
| Mike Waldram    | - | the importance of fire management as perceived by the Manitoba Model Forest in its program and how the Model Forest can help |
| Bill Medd       | - | MNR is predominantly a fire suppression organization with some resource limitations  |
|                 | - | Model Forest provides opportunity to develop model strategy  |
| Peter Konopelny | - | fire report data for fire management planning is extensive and can contribute to the understanding on which to build         |

a management strategy.

- Glen Peterson - discussion on National Fire Information System and its application to fire management in the Model Forest
- Jim Martinuk - MNR procedures, resources and priorities;  
fire suppression calls for understanding of values at risk and trade-offs among these; current risk maps are too broad;  
current practices of fire resource mobilization.

These presentations were particularly useful in providing expanded background information to the participants.

### **3.0 Workshop Discussion**

It was noted that most stakeholders had a limited understanding of fire management practices in the Model Forest. Their inputs and comments regarding areas of concern often centred around non-fire issues such as road access and parks policies. Unfortunately these discussions took up valuable time leaving less opportunity to discuss the real purpose of the workshop.

The morning session focused on values-at-risk while the afternoon discussion was spent on the Fire Management Process:

- prevention
- detection
- pre-suppression
- suppression

### **3.1 Values at Risk**

Extensive discussion with good input from participants led to the development of the following

list of forest values at risk in the event of a fire:

- life
- property/equipment
- timber
- wildlife and its habitat (will vary extensively depending on species involved and will also impact on trappers, photographers, etc.)
- recreation (camping, canoeing, etc.)
- water (fish habitat, stream flow dynamics, etc.)
- wilderness values and opportunities
- traditional values including hunting and gathering
- heritage, archaeology and history
- air quality, carbon sink and global warming
- soil and nutrients
- berry picking, mushrooms, etc.
- biodiversity and ecological integrity including natural succession
- tourism, employment, education, aesthetics

The workshop participants attempted at length to put a ranking on these values at risk in terms of two perspectives: Priority (low, medium and high) and Longevity of Impact (short, medium and long). The net effect, largely due to personal values, was that all values tended to fall within the high category. The group concluded that this was not too valuable an exercise. There was general agreement, however, that existing fire risk maps are too broad and may not be too useful as management tools. Smaller subdivisions and zones are needed and extensive community input would be highly appropriate in determining priorities and values.

### **3.2 Classification of the Fire Management Process**

Following a detailed presentation led by Jim Martinuk (Regional Fire Control Officer) on existing MNR plans and priorities, the group as a whole contributed a broad range of observations under some of these main phases of fire management. These concentrated on prevention and detection and are summarized as follows:

Prevention

- logging roads open up access to lakes. This is of concern to lodge owners because increased public use of roads tends to destroy the pristine environment (which is what lodge operators sell). More extensive use also can lead to higher probability of man-caused fire. (Non-fire issue)
- MNR has authority to close any road when exceptional fire conditions are being experienced. Otherwise, roads are required to be kept open. A road classification system (currently under development via another Model Forest project) may help in this regard
- roads also are important for purposes of access for fire control
- problem is policing of road access (Non-fire issue)
- could turn over manning of specific fire towers to local residents
- should have categories of users : if I'm a wise user, I don't see why I should be kept out
- education of cottage owners is important program. Provide them with the knowledge and they will learn. The time and leadership of cottage associations is very important in this regard
- there should be codes of practice for owners to minimize fire risk (e.g.) clearing brush around cottages
- could send out pamphlet to insurance companies advising of fire risk and practices to reduce hazard
- species selection around cottages (hardwoods preferable to softwoods)

- many man-caused fires have started in the agricultural fringe, from garbage dumps, hydro lines, leaf burning, etc. It is in fact illegal to burn anything in a dump. Primary fire sources should be focused upon in prevention program
- volunteer fire crews : need training of local volunteers and assistance to equip volunteer crews
- local people in the bush could notify MNR of hazardous conditions
- expanded educational program on fire prevention at high school level should be a community responsibility

#### Detection

- fire towers are not consistently manned (they are only manned when fire hazard reaches a certain level)
- is there a formula or policy governing closure of the woods? (closure of the forest is by Minister's signature)
- statistical baseline information will contribute to knowledge base required for closure rules
- it is not the regular but the occasional user of the forest who is the greatest source of risk
- rules about no open fires are the envy of the rest of the country
- third party operators and communities have lots of capability and could be a valuable resource
- control is the key rather than restricting people from being in the woods

- prescribed burning under controlled conditions could be a valuable management tool for hazard reduction especially in roadside ditches and marshes

As noted above, the group concentrated their comments on fire prevention and detection and offered little in the areas of pre-suppression and suppression. These latter two topics were covered in detail, however, by Jim Martinuk in his introductory presentation. He reviewed MNR staff allocations and their locations; fire hazard readings and procedures; and the planning process used as a basis for allocating fire resources. With the various presentations by the Steering Committee, the group was provided with a reasonably good understanding in MNR's operations, procedures and practices.

#### **4.0 Summary and Recommendations**

The workshop as a whole was a mixed success. Notwithstanding a broad contact list and every effort made to encourage Model Forest stakeholders to attend, participation was lower than expected. Fortunately stakeholder representation was reasonably broad (economic communities, trappers, wild rice growers, Abitibi Price, MNR, cottage owners and lodge operators).

The participation of MNR fire management experts from Winnipeg, Beausejour, Lac du Bonnet, Pine Falls and Bissett were particularly valuable in their capacity as resource people.

Towards developing a model fire management strategy for the Model Forest, the workshop was a useful first step and a good educational experience for many of the participants. Originally, this workshop was supposed to be an initial effort at creating awareness about fire and its hazards to the various stakeholders of the Model Forest. Subsequently, the original MNR proposal to the Model Forest was to have included various other components (communications and awareness, alternative forestry practices, analysis of values at risk, fire environment description and analysis), all of which would feed into a comprehensive strategy. This workshop contributed, although in a limited way towards most of these components. However, further work in this area should be carefully designed by the proponents and

handled on a more specific level.

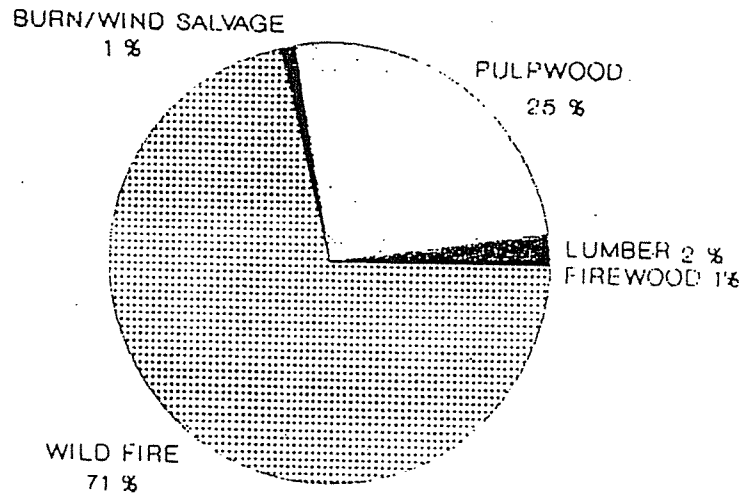
The sponsorship of MNR and the Manitoba Model Forest was most important in this initial effort. It was agreed that this report would be circulated to all names on the original contact list (i.e., not just the workshop attendees). Any comments or feedback would be appreciated.

On the whole, there was evident a degree of apathy about the fire management system development process and active participation was hard to solicit. It almost appeared that attendees felt that this was an MNR responsibility and they had a minimal role to play even as major stakeholders in the area. Some useful suggestions were forthcoming, particularly capitalizing on community and individual volunteerism, the need for training and awareness at individual, school and community levels and certain perspectives on the values at risk from fire although very much from a respond perspective. Significantly, also attendance by community representatives and LEO's was notably lacking notwithstanding the efforts made to involve them.

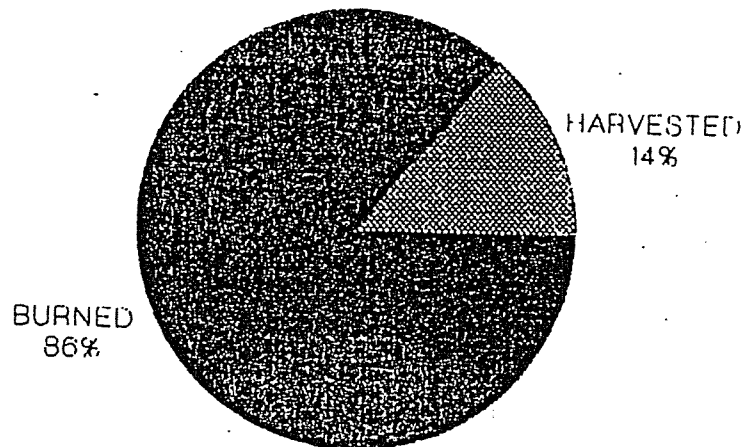
By way of recommendation for future project work in this area, the consultants and Steering Committee feel that focus should be narrowed to specific aspects of the fire management issue (i.e., cottage owners; community education; awareness and training; awareness of the values at risk through the local communications media) and that these types of issues should be factored into MNR's ongoing policies and practices. On the whole, we believe we attempted to cover too much ground via this workshop.

Additional comments and suggestions from participants or any Model Forest stakeholder would be gratefully received. Clearly, fire is by far the greatest source of disturbance (see chart on following page) to the forest landscape and any constructive comment or criticism would be welcome.

# Inventory Depletion on the FML #01, 1979 - 1989



## Volume Depleted



## Area Depleted

**APPENDIX A**

**Sample Invitation Letter  
and  
List of Invitees**

January 20, 1994

Dear :

The Manitoba Natural Resources in collaboration with the Manitoba Model Forest and Abitibi Price will be holding a Fire Management Strategic Planning Workshop on February 22, 1994 at the Manitou Lodge, Pine Falls. The purpose of the workshop is to obtain ideas and information from invited participants and Model Forest stakeholders towards developing a fire management strategy for the Model Forest region. An important theme of the workshop is to solicit constructive comments and suggestions for the future rather than to critique the past.

As a stakeholder within the region, you or your designate are invited to participate in this one day workshop and express your ideas and priorities in developing this strategic plan. The agenda (attached) will include an introduction and overview of the current regional fire management program, two working group sessions, a brief presentation of the days discussions and a workshop summation. Additional background information is included with this letter.

Workshop participants will include MNR representatives, private industry, communities and municipalities within the Model Forest, Aboriginal groups, cottage owners, recreationists and various other stakeholders. The workshop will begin at 9:00 a.m. and continue through most of the day. Lunch will be provided.

If you have any questions regarding the workshop, feel free to call me at 452-0037. If for any reason I am not available, you can ask for Gary Ardron. In any event, please RSVP to us at 452-0037 by February 7, 1994.

We look forward to seeing you on February 22.

Yours truly,

Peter M. Ashton  
Workshop Coordinator

PMA/jm  
Att.

**APPENDIX B**

**Attendees**