

FACT SHEET

Clearcut Logging and Mercury Poisoning: Linked Threats to Grassy Narrows

1. Clearcut logging releases mercury into boreal lakes and rivers

“boreal Canadian Shield forest watersheds serve as large reservoirs of Hg that shed their metal load when the soil and the land hydrology are disrupted by timber harvesting.” [Desrosier et al., 2006]

“clear-cut logging increases the export of dissolved organic carbon (DOC) and Hg [5,6] and can stimulate the bacterial production of methyl mercury (MeHg).” [Garcia et al., 2005]

“a concurrent increase in Hg levels in aquatic organisms is typically observed in lakes after logging (Rask et al. 1994; Garcia and Carignan 1999, 2005)” [Desrosier et al., 2006]

2. Mercury makes the fish unsafe to eat

“Hg concentrations exceeded the advisory limit for human consumption (0.5 µg/g wet wt) from the World Health Organization in all top predatory species (northern pike, walleye, and burbot) found in cut and two partially burnt lakes.” [Garcia et al., 2005]

“This limit was surpassed in only 18% of piscivorous species populations found in reference lakes and in no species from completely burned lakes.” [Garcia et al., 2005]

“Average Hg level in standard 560-mm northern pike, on a dry weight basis, was significantly higher in logged lakes (3.4 mg/g) than in reference lakes (1.9 mg/g).” [Garcia et al., 2000] (N.B. 79% more Hg)

3. Mercury in fish hurts Grassy Narrows

“it is an undoubtable fact that Minamata disease occurred in [Grassy Narrows and Whitedog], based on our long-term investigation result.” [Harada et al., 2011]

59% of the 160 people tested in Grassy Narrows (GN) and White Dog (WD) in 2010 were impacted by mercury (diagnosed with Minamata Disease (MD) or suspected MD (SMD)). [Harada et al., 2011]

44% of people tested aged 21-41 had MD or SMD. All these people were born after the mercury dumping was stopped in 1970. [Harada et al., 2011]

74.4% of impacted people (with MD or SMD) were not receiving any compensation. [Harada et al., 2011]

4. Ontario planning another decade of clearcut logging in Grassy Narrows

On December 23, 2013 the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources made final a new plan for another decade of clearcut logging on Grassy Narrows territory. [Whiskey Jack Forest Management Plan 2012-2022]

"Premier Wynne, it is within your power to ensure that the mistakes of the past are not repeated at the expense of another generation of Grassy Narrows children," said Grassy Narrows Chief Simon Fobister. "I call on you to intervene to repeal this hurtful plan and to ensure that never again will Ontario attempt to force decisions on our people and our lands." [Grassy Narrows Chief Simon Fobister, press release December 23, 2013]

"This logging plan will ultimately place our Anishinabe way of life at risk and seeks to undermine our existence on the land." [Grassy Narrows Chief and Council press release December 21, 2011]

REFERENCES

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Photo: Jon Schledewitz