

Canadian Peatland Facts and Harvesting Activities

- Peatlands, covering approximately 113 million hectares of Canada's land and freshwater area (over 11 percent of the surface area of the nation), comprise 76 percent of the 148 million hectares of the wetlands across Canada.
- The volume of peat on Canadian wetlands is an estimated three trillion cubic meters, a major portion of the global peat resource.
- Most peatlands occur in the boreal zone of Canada and are generally unaffected by agricultural, urban, ports/harbors and industrial impacts.
- Only specific ranges of peatland forms have peat and/or peat moss which are suitable for use in horticultural and other current applications.
- Peatlands support a complex mixture of ecological functions such as habitats for wildlife and other biological resources as well as social and cultural benefits.
- Horticultural peat and peat moss are valuable, environmentally friendly products used by millions of residents of North America for gardening, greenhouse and a variety of other applications. Peat moss has also entered the global marketplace in a range of uses, such as balneology, biofiltration technologies and hydrocarbon sorbants.
- Over 70 million tons of peat is estimated to accumulate in the natural environment each year in Canada, while current applications utilize approximately one million tons annually.
- Less than 0.02 percent (17,000 hectares) of Canada's peatland area is currently being used for horticultural peat harvesting and related applications. At present, no peat in Canada is used for fuel purposes.
- Total revenues for horticultural peat in 1999 were approximately CDN\$ 170 million and the industry provided employment for thousands of residents in rural areas of the nation.
- An integrated national inventory of peatland distribution and sites of regional or national significance does not exist in Canada. However detailed peatland databases in portions of Canada are now in place, notably parts of the Prairie Provinces, central and southern Ontario, southern Quebec, the Island of Newfoundland and all three Maritime Provinces.
- Several provinces have wetland conservation and management policies in place: Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario, while New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island are at various stages of developing such policies. Other provinces, such as British Columbia, Quebec and Newfoundland are addressing wetland conservation through natural resources and wildlife programs.

Information supplied by Canadian Peat Moss Association

