

Increase in harvested wood in 2010

GNWT unveils biomass strategy

Deh Cho partners to produce wood pellets

by Guy Quenneville
Northern News Services
NWT

Four milling operations harvested wood cut in the NWT last year.

The companies were Patterson Sawmill (South Slave region), Jean Marie River Log Homes (Deh Cho), K'asho Got'ine Sawmill (Sahtu) and Norman Wells RRC (Sahtu).

Between them, a total of 30,404 cubic metres of wood was milled in 2010. That compares to 28,857 cubic metres in 2009 and 29,087 cubic metres in 2008.

As is typical, fuelwood accounted for the vast majority of harvested wood – 23,190 cubic metres, or 76 per cent of the total.

Meanwhile, 5,150 cubic metres of saw timber was harvested, and another 1,344 cubic metres of building logs.

All operations were running the year before, and no new milling permits were issued by the GNWT's depart-

ment of natural resources in 2010.

However, when it came to timber cutting, 27 permits were issued last year.

Biomass strategy

In early 2010, the GNWT unveiled its NWT Biomass Energy Strategy.

The strategy outlines four main objectives:

- Increasing education and awareness of biomass as a heating option for residents and businesses;
- Promoting biomass heating options;
- Promoting greater stability in the supply of biomass in the NWT, including locally produced biomass; and
- Promoting combined heat and power technologies.

One project has already started.

Wayne McKay, owner of Checkpoint, a former rest stop located at the junction of the Mackenzie Highway and the Liard Trail, has joined forces

with Ivan Simons, owner of HR Thomson Consultants.

The two long-time advocates of wood pellet boilers have assembled a small-scale pellet mill at the Checkpoint site.

Their ultimate aim is to use biomass culled from McKay's 10-acre lot for experimental production of pellets and, if all goes well, eventually establish a small-scale wood pellet production facility that will supply retailers across the territory.

"In the end, when it's all said and done, we want to be able to produce wood pellets from local biomass," said McKay. "It's never been done in the Northwest Territories. We'll be the first."

The NWT currently consumes between 15,000 and 18,000 tonnes of wood pellets a year, compared to the 60,000 tonnes churned out at the La Crete sawmills in northern Alberta every year, according to the GNWT.



NNSL file photo

The NWT was home to four milling operations in 2010.

Wood harvest in the NWT in 2010 (in cubic metres)

Type of product	South Slave	North Slave	Deh Cho	Sahtu	Inuvik	Total
Fuelwood	12,068	6,629	2,100	2,943	170	23,910
Saw timber	5,010	0	0	140	0	5,150
Building logs	394	0	900	0	50	1,344

Source: GNWT

Wood harvested in the NWT in 2010 totalled 30,404 cubic metres.

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