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ABSTRACT

Many options have been proposed to adapt forest management to the effects of climate change. One of these options, assisted migration of tree species, is now being explored by forest managers. Forests have historically adjusted to changes in climate on their own. Today, however, the climate is changing much more rapidly than ever before, and there is a risk that tree species may be unable to genetically adapt or migrate quickly enough. The term “assisted migration” refers to human intervention to deliberately move species to new, more favorable locations, with the goal of helping them to survive and flourish in a changing climate. Implementing assisted migration poses new and complex scientific, social, and ethical questions. This summary report provides an overview of assisted tree migration, describes many of the potential opportunities and risks associated with this strategy, and outlines current thinking on responsible implementation of assisted migration of tree species. Informed and open discussion among all players with an interest in the future of Canada’s forests will be key to exploring the assisted migration option. This report seeks to provide a balanced overview to inform the emerging dialogue on this topic.

Key words: Assisted migration, assisted colonization, managed relocation, range expansion, climate change, adaptation, forest.