

Minakami Forest Industry

Approximately 90 percent of Minakami's total area (78,108 ha) is covered by forest. Most of that forested land is managed by the government, but much of the privately owned land consists of old-growth deciduous forest that is untended and has become overgrown.

Prior to the introduction of modern technology, foraging, hunting, and collecting firewood were integral parts of everyday life, and everyday cooking and heating were done using wood-burning stoves like the one nearby. Today, however, most residences use electric appliances, and the close relationship with the forest has been lost.

Without regular thinning, forests become dense and dark, and it becomes difficult for shrubs and grasses to grow. In turn, this creates a lack of food and habitable space for hares and mice, who themselves are important prey species. In time, the surface soil itself can lose its absorbency and become badly eroded, increasing the risk of landslides.

In order to keep the forest healthy, Minakami is seeking a return to the small-scale forestry of the past. In 2016, the local government conducted the first of several training courses to teach local residents basic logging skills. Through the implementation of small-scale, sustainable logging practiced by self-employed individuals, the habitats of local wildlife and the safety of the community can both be maintained.