

UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À MONTRÉAL

MORTALITÉ INDUITE PAR LA COUPE DE JARDINAGE EN FORÊT
FEUILLUE DU SUD DU QUÉBEC : PEUT-ON MIEUX EN COMPRENDRE
LES CAUSES?

MÉMOIRE

PRÉSENTÉ

COMME EXIGENCE PARTIELLE

DE LA MAÎTRISE EN BIOLOGIE

PAR

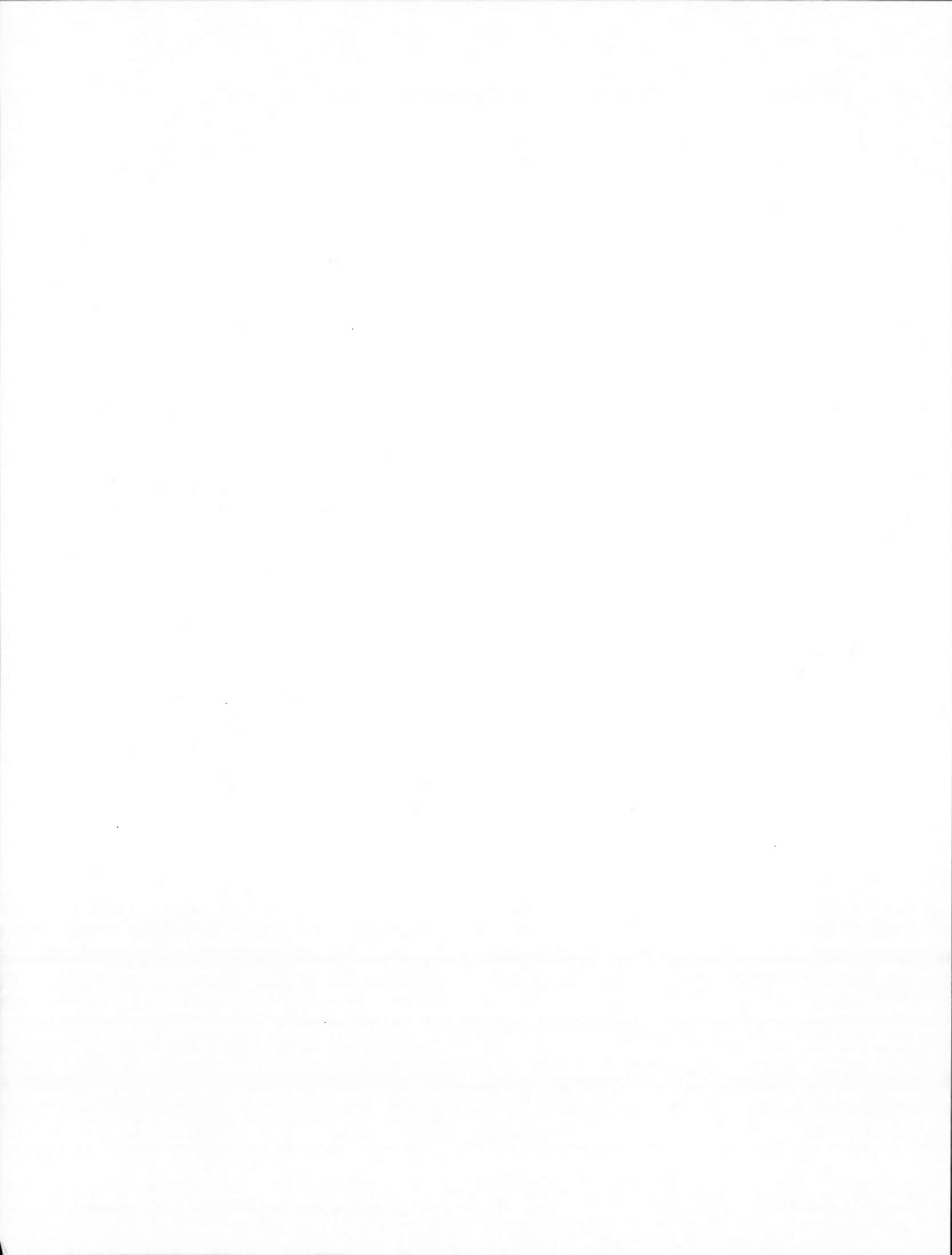
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AVANT-PROPOS

Ce mémoire, écrit sous forme d'articles scientifiques, comprend deux chapitres. Une introduction générale précédant le chapitre 1 décrit l'état des connaissances sur le sujet ainsi que la problématique de recherche. Une conclusion générale suit le chapitre 2 et résume les conclusions des deux chapitres, en plus de faire un retour sur les objectifs mentionnés dans l'introduction générale. Les deux articles seront soumis pour publication dans des revues arbitrées.

Je suis l'auteure principale des deux articles, ayant réalisé la revue de littérature, l'élaboration du protocole de recherche, l'échantillonnage sur le terrain, les analyses statistiques ainsi que la rédaction. Frank Berninger et Michael Papaik sont co-auteurs des deux articles : ils ont participé à l'élaboration du protocole de recherche et à la rédaction de ce mémoire. Frank Berninger a également supervisé les analyses statistiques, auxquelles Robert Schneider a aussi contribué pour le chapitre 2 en plus de commenter les versions précédentes de cet article.

Je voudrais remercier mon directeur de recherche, Frank Berninger, pour son soutien, sa patience infinie et ses idées stimulantes. Merci de m'avoir laissé la liberté d'apprendre de mes erreurs, tout en étant toujours disponible. Merci à mon co-directeur, Michael Papaik, pour ses judicieux conseils, ainsi qu'à Marilou Beudet et Christian Messier, membres du comité d'orientation, pour leurs commentaires avisés et constructifs. Merci également à Robert

Schneider pour ses suggestions qui, bien que parfois déroutantes, ont définitivement amélioré les analyses, et pour avoir eu la patience de répondre en détail à mes nombreuses questions existentielles.

Un grand merci aux nombreux assistants de recherche, qui ont contribué à la récolte des données sur le terrain, particulièrement Simon Delisle-Boulianne, Sophie-Andrée Poirier et Jean-Benoît Guénette, ainsi qu'à Patrick Cartier (Domtar). Merci à Marie-Noëlle Caron pour son aide précieuse lors des mesures dendrochronologiques. Merci également aux professionnels de recherche du CEF, qui font un merveilleux travail : Marc Mazerolle, Mélanie Desrochers, Daniel Lesieur et Stéphane Daigle. Un grand merci à David Gervais pour le support moral et pour son aide lors de la rédaction des articles en anglais.

Merci à mes collègues étudiants de la Chaire en productivité forestière, du CEF ainsi que la gang de CONFOR 2008, qui ont contribué à rendre les études supérieures aussi enrichissantes sur le plan personnel qu'intellectuel. Finalement, merci à ma famille et mes amis pour leur soutien et leurs encouragements constants, qui m'ont aidé beaucoup plus qu'ils ne le pensent.

Ce projet n'aurait pu voir le jour sans l'appui financier du CRSNG et du Réseau de Gestion Durable des Forêts (SFMN). Merci à tous les collaborateurs du projet SFMN « Tree Mortality Following Partial Stand Harvests: A Cross-Canada Study » supervisé par Sean Thomas.

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RÉSUMÉ

Au Québec, le jardinage est le système sylvicole le plus pratiqué dans les forêts à structure inéquienne. Ce type d'aménagement vise à améliorer la qualité des peuplements en prélevant périodiquement le tiers de la surface terrière. La priorité lors de la récolte est accordée aux tiges de faible vigueur, qui sont choisies individuellement ou par petits groupes. Ceci permet de créer des conditions de croissance favorables pour les arbres résiduels, en plus de réduire la mortalité naturelle après la coupe. Cependant, les opérations forestières réalisées périodiquement dans un même peuplement sont une source de préoccupation, puisque les arbres résiduels sont soumis de façon répétitive à des blessures d'exploitation. De plus, le passage de la machinerie dans les sentiers de débardage perturbe le sol et brise des racines, causant possiblement un stress hydrique chez les arbres situés près des sentiers.

La première partie de cette étude avait pour but d'évaluer l'incidence de ces perturbations sur la mortalité des arbres ainsi que de repérer des facteurs prédisposants possibles pour des érablières jardinées. Des inventaires ont été réalisés dans des peuplements soumis à des coupes de jardinage à différentes années. Les analyses ont révélé que les blessures d'exploitation ainsi que des causes de mortalité inconnues étaient associées aux arbres en bordure des sentiers, représentant respectivement 21 % et 26 % de la mortalité récente observée. La taille des arbres et leur espèce ont été cernées comme facteurs prédisposants : la mortalité était supérieure dans les classes de diamètre inférieures et chez le bouleau jaune, qui a aussi été trouvé plus sensible aux blessures d'exploitation. La deuxième partie de l'étude visait à évaluer l'effet des perturbations liées à la machinerie lourde sur le bilan hydrique d'arbres résiduels. Dans une érablière soumise à une coupe de jardinage en 2006, 35 érables à sucre vivants ont été choisis de façon à former un gradient de distance au sentier de débardage. Le flux de sève de ces arbres a été mesuré à l'aide de capteurs. Une zone d'influence circulaire a été estimée autour de chacun des arbres et le pourcentage de cette zone sous un sentier a été calculé (MD). Une régression linéaire segmentée a montré une diminution du flux de sève après un seuil MD de 18,17 %. Des modèles mixtes linéaires ont révélés que bien que les perturbations n'avaient pas d'effet sur le flux de sève sous cette valeur seuil,

une augmentation de 1 % de MD après le seuil entraînait une diminution de 1.8 % du flux de sève. Pour un arbre avec 40.26 % de MD, ceci représente une diminution de 39,76 %, valeur comparable à ce qui a été observé durant des périodes de sécheresse dans d'autres études. Aucune différence n'a été observée entre les arbres près de sentiers primaires et ceux près de sentiers secondaires. Ceci suggère que la majorité des dommages sont causés par le premier passage de machinerie. Ces résultats indiquent que même sous des conditions climatiques favorables, telles que celles observées durant la période d'échantillonnage, les perturbations liées à la machinerie peuvent causer un stress hydrique important chez les arbres en bordure de sentiers.

Ce stress hydrique pourrait expliquer une partie des causes de mortalité inconnues observées dans la première partie de l'étude. Les perturbations liées à la récolte pourraient donc être responsables de près de 47 % de la mortalité après coupe de jardinage. De plus, la disproportion entre les classes de taille et les espèces pourraient avoir des effets négatifs à long terme sur la structure et la composition du peuplement.

MOTS-CLÉS : coupe de jardinage, mortalité des arbres, érablière à bouleau jaune, perturbations, machinerie lourde, blessures d'exploitation, stress hydrique

INTRODUCTION GÉNÉRALE

0.1 Problématique

Les arbres morts jouent sans contredit un rôle écologique important dans le maintien de la biodiversité et de l'équilibre naturel des forêts (Harmon *et al.*, 1986; Darveau et Desrochers, 2000; Jonsson, Kruys et Ranius, 2005; Drapeau *et al.*, 2009). Toutefois, du point de vue de l'aménagement forestier et des considérations économiques et sociales qui en découlent, de forts taux de mortalité sont peu souhaitables et la production d'arbres sains est habituellement visée. Une évaluation des causes de mortalité et de la structure du bois mort est essentielle pour assurer à la fois un apport suffisant en volume de bois à l'industrie et la préservation d'une quantité suffisante de débris ligneux grossiers et de chicots dans nos forêts.

La coupe de jardinage vise à récolter en priorité les arbres en perdition (qui mourront avant la prochaine rotation), choisis individuellement ou par petits groupes. Cette méthode a donc pour effet, en théorie, de diminuer la mortalité naturelle après la coupe (Guillemette et Bédard, 2006), d'augmenter la croissance des arbres résiduels et de favoriser l'établissement de la régénération en créant une ouverture favorable de la canopée (augmentation de la luminosité, diminution de la compétition) et ainsi augmenter le volume et la qualité du bois d'œuvre produit à long terme (Matthews, 1989; Majcen et Richard, 1995; Bédard et Majcen, 2003; Majcen, Bédard et Meunier, 2005).

Avant les années 1980, le type de coupe le plus fréquemment utilisé dans les peuplements inéquiennes du Québec était la coupe à diamètre limite, ou coupe « d'écrémage » (Majcen, 1990; Boulet, 2005). Comme son nom l'indique, cette intervention consiste à récolter les tiges de grandes dimensions, sans égard au volume de bois récolté ou à la qualité des arbres. Afin de contrer les effets dévastateurs que cette pratique entraîna (diminution du potentiel de production de bois à long terme, dégradation des peuplements résiduels, prolifération d'espèces indésirables (Bédard et Majcen, 2003; Boulet, 2005), la coupe de jardinage fut de plus en plus utilisée jusqu'à être rendue obligatoire, là où elle est applicable, par le Ministère des Ressources naturelles en 1994 (Anonymous, 1994). De 2002 à 2009, plus de 150 000 ha de forêts publiques et 25 000 ha de forêts privées ont été traitées avec des coupes de jardinage ou de pré-jardinage (MRNF, 2009).

Dans les années 1980, la Direction de la recherche forestière (DRF) a mis en place des blocs expérimentaux dans le sud du Québec afin de déterminer la réaction de croissance des peuplements soumis à une coupe de jardinage et ainsi établir les intervalles de rotation et le volume de bois pouvant être récolté (e.g. Majcen et Richard, 1992; Majcen, 1995; Majcen, Bédard et Meunier, 2005). Les résultats de ces expériences démontrent que l'accroissement annuel net est presque toujours supérieur dans les blocs traités par rapport aux témoins. Ces résultats ont également permis de fixer l'intensité de la coupe à environ le tiers de la surface terrière, pour une durée de rotation de 15 à 20 ans (Majcen, 1995; Majcen et Bédard, 2000). Cependant, les opérations sylvicoles réalisées dans ces blocs expérimentaux ont probablement été effectuées avec plus de soins que celles en conditions industrielles et les résultats ne sont donc pas transposables aux peuplements exploités à grande échelle (Majcen, 1996).

Le Ministère des Ressources naturelles s'est donc doté d'un dispositif de suivi afin de mesurer les effets réels, en milieu industriel, de la coupe de jardinage (Bédard et Brassard, 2002). Les résultats après cinq ans démontrent un accroissement annuel net de $0,12 \text{ m}^2/\text{ha}$ pour les forêts jardinées en 1995 et de $0,11 \text{ m}^2/\text{ha}$ pour celles jardinées en 1996, alors qu'un rendement d'environ $0,30 \text{ m}^2/\text{ha}/\text{année}$ est nécessaire pour reconstituer en vingt ans le volume récolté (Anonymous, 2002). Les rendements réels obtenus atteignent donc seulement environ 40% des rendements anticipés par la DRF et s'expliquent par des taux de mortalité deux fois plus élevés (Bédard et Brassard, 2002). De plus, il a été observé que 79% de ces tiges mortes étaient non vigoureuses au moment de la coupe. Il a alors été avancé que les forts taux de mortalité étaient dus au non-respect des critères préconisés lors du choix des arbres à prélever (i.e. les tiges non vigoureuses, susceptibles de se détériorer et de mourir, doivent être récoltées en priorité).

Depuis 1995 et 1996, les normes ont graduellement changé et un nouveau système de classification des tiges a été introduit (Boulet, 2005). Cependant, les causes exactes de la mortalité après coupe de jardinage demeurent incertaines et soulèvent d'importantes questions : les dommages et blessures causés aux peuplements résiduels lors des opérations forestières peuvent-ils être partiellement responsables de cette mortalité élevée? Y a-t-il des facteurs qui prédisposent certains arbres à mourir? Peut-on ultimement réduire la mortalité en tenant compte de ces facteurs?

0.2 État des connaissances

La mortalité des arbres est un phénomène complexe car elle est souvent le résultat de l'effet cumulatif de deux ou plusieurs causes. Manion (1991) distingue trois types de facteurs: les facteurs *prédisposants*, tels que l'âge, le potentiel génétique, les virus, le climat et les conditions du sol, agissent à long terme et modifient la réponse de l'arbre aux stress *incitants* (défoliation par des insectes, gel, sécheresse, blessure mécanique, etc.) dont l'action est de plus courte durée. Ces stress diminuent la vigueur de l'arbre et peuvent entraîner la mort plus ou moins rapidement, parfois sous l'action combinée de facteurs *contribuants* (e.g. pathogènes fongiques). Les perturbations causées par les opérations forestières pourraient jouer le rôle de stress incitants et expliquer partiellement la mortalité élevée observée après la coupe de jardinage.

0.2.1 Dommages aux arbres résiduels

Il est généralement reconnu que les arbres résiduels dans les peuplements soumis à des coupes partielles sont sujets à des dommages causés par les opérations forestières (Matthews, 1989; Anderson, 1994; Vasiliauskas, 2001; Nyland, 2002). L'abattage et le débardage occasionnent inévitablement des blessures aux arbres à proximité des sentiers, qui varient de la perte de quelques branches (Nyland et Gabriel, 1971; Miller, Lamson et Brock, 1984) à de larges abrasions sur le tronc et les racines qui exposent l'aubier. Ces abrasions sont le type de dommage le plus fréquent, particulièrement pour les petites tiges et les arbres situés les plus près des sentiers (Nyland, 1989;

Fajvan, Knipling et Tift, 2002), et sont préoccupantes pour au moins deux raisons : 1) elles créent des portes d'entrées pour les pathogènes fongiques, qui colorent et dégradent le bois, ce qui diminue le potentiel de bois de qualité et 2) elles annellent partiellement les tiges et peuvent donc réduire la croissance diamétrale (Lamson et Smith, 1988). Lamson, Smith et Miller (1985) rapporte des abrasions exposant l'aubier sur 12% de la surface terrière après une coupe de jardinage alors que Nyland (1994) indique que les arbres sévèrement blessés peuvent représenter jusqu'à 25% du peuplement résiduel.

Des études rapportent qu'il y a peu ou pas de différence en terme de dommages entre des peuplements récoltés à l'aide d'une abatteuse mécanique et ceux dont les arbres ont été abattus manuellement (Woods, Smith et McPherson, 2007). En effet, les blessures sont le plus souvent causées lors du transport du bois (Vasiliauskas, 2001). Nyland (1971) rapporte que 70 % des arbres en bordure de sentier primaire sont blessés lors du débardage. Les abrasions sont cependant plus fréquentes lors des coupes de printemps et d'été que d'hiver, car les parois des cellules cambiales sont alors minces et flexibles, ce qui rend le cambium plus susceptible à la fragmentation lors d'un impact (Anderson, 1994).

La surface de bois exposé détermine la capacité de l'arbre à former un cal de cicatrisation refermant la blessure, qui diminue les risques d'infection fongique. Comme les petites blessures se referment plus vite (Smith, Miller et Schuler, 1994), les probabilités qu'elles développent de la carie sont plus faibles. Des différences entre les espèces ont été observées : Smith, Miller et Schuler (1994) rapportent que les espèces à croissance rapide, telles que le tulipier de Virginie et le chêne rouge, referment plus rapidement de petites

blessures que d'autres espèces à croissance plus lente. Cependant, ils citent des résultats d'une autre étude indiquant que les blessures de plus de 150 pouces carrés (967 cm^2) sur des érables à sucre ont 50% de chance de développer de la carie sur un horizon de 20 ans (Hesterberg, 1957; in Smith, Miller et Schuler, 1994), alors que cette surface est de seulement 90 pouces carrés (580 cm^2) pour le bouleau jaune (Lavallee et Lortie, 1968), une espèce à croissance relativement plus rapide.

Vasiliauskas (2001) a répertorié les risques d'infection pour beaucoup d'espèces et conclue que la majorité sont très susceptibles, à l'exception de quelques conifères : 60 à 100% des blessures infligées aux arbres produisent une décoloration ou de la carie. Les dommages situés dans le bas du tronc et sur les racines ont plus de chance de développer de la carie car ils sont en contact avec le sol (Anderson, 1994; Nyland, 1994), et Vasiliauskas (2001) indique que ce sont les plus fréquents. Les effets des abrasions sur la croissance sont difficiles à prévoir, et la littérature rapporte divers résultats variant d'une réduction de 40% à aucun effet (Vasiliauskas, 2001). Cependant, il a été suggéré que les dommages pouvaient accroître la mortalité (Nyland, 2002).

0.2.2 Perturbations du sol

Au cours des dernières décennies, le degré de mécanisation des opérations forestières a considérablement augmenté (Wästerlund, 1994). Cependant, les diverses machines utilisées exercent des pressions considérables sur les sols forestiers (Deschênes, 1992) et des questions ont été soulevées quand

à leurs effets sur la productivité à long terme. Les facteurs les plus importants déterminant la sévérité des perturbations sont le type d'équipement utilisé, le type de sol et la saison de la récolte (Kimmins, 2004). Matthews (1989) indique que les symptômes les plus communs de détérioration du sol suite à la coupe sont : 1) compaction du sol et réduction du volume d'enracinement 2) sécheresse ou humidité excessive dans les horizons supérieurs du sol 3) perte de certains horizons due à l'écoulement de surface et l'érosion.

La compaction du sol altère la structure et l'hydrologie du sol en augmentant la densité apparente (« bulk density »); brisant les granulats; réduisant la porosité, l'aération et la capacité d'infiltration; ainsi qu'en augmentant la résistance du sol, l'écoulement d'eau en surface et l'érosion (Kozłowski, 1999). Bien que la compaction du sol puisse avoir certains effets bénéfiques sur la croissance des végétaux, les effets néfastes sont en général plus courants (Kozłowski, 1999). Une réduction de la croissance des arbres et de la survie de semis (Gomez *et al.*, 2002; Maynard et Senyk, 2004; Blouin *et al.*, 2008; Zhao *et al.*, 2010) a été observée dans les sols compactés. Plusieurs études rapportent également une diminution de la croissance et de l'élongation des racines (Taylor et Brar, 1991; Whalley, Dumitru et Dexter, 1995; Starsev et McNabb, 2001; Malo, 2009), qui serait directement proportionnelle au degré de compaction pour la plupart des sols (Miller, Colbert et Morris, 2004). La réduction de la disponibilité en eau dans le sol due à la compaction ainsi que les dommages infligés directement aux racines lors du passage de la machinerie (Nadezhdina *et al.*, 2006; Komatsu *et al.*, 2007) pourraient causer un stress hydrique chez les arbres résiduels.

0.2.3 Stress hydrique

Différents facteurs de stress agissent tout au long de la vie des arbres. Dépendamment de la durée et de l'intensité du stress, les arbres démontrent diverses réactions complexes. Cependant, lorsque le stress dépasse le seuil de tolérance, il peut entraîner la mort. La sécheresse est reconnue pour être un facteur important limitant la croissance des arbres et des plantes (Kozlowski, 1968; Kozlowski et Pallardy, 1997). En effet, pour chaque gramme de matière organique produite, une plante a besoin d'absorber environ 500 grammes d'eau (Taiz et Zeiger, 2002). Lorsque la disponibilité de l'eau dans le sol n'est pas limitée, la transpiration dépend fortement du déficit de saturation de l'air en vapeur d'eau (« vapor pressure deficit ») et du rayonnement solaire (Tan, Black et Nnyamah, 1978; Granier et Bréda, 1996).

Cependant, lorsque l'absorption d'eau est limitée (faible disponibilité en eau dans le sol, blessures au système racinaire), la fermeture des stomates (Jarvis et McNaughton, 1986) limite la photosynthèse en raison de la diminution de l'assimilation de carbone (Hanson et Hitz, 1982). La croissance des arbres est donc dépendante de la quantité d'eau disponible dans le sol et de leur capacité à prélever celle-ci. Le bris des racines par la machinerie lourde pourrait provoquer un stress hydrique, puisque la réduction de la surface racinaire diminue la capacité de l'arbre à prélever l'eau et les nutriments du sol (Nyland, 2002; Nadezhdina *et al.*, 2006). Dépendamment de la durée de ce stress et de la vigueur initiale de l'arbre, il pourrait entraîner la mort.

0.2.4 Facteurs prédisposants

Divers facteurs peuvent prédisposer les arbres à la mortalité. Pour prédire la mortalité dans les modèles de croissance, la compétition est souvent le principal facteur considéré (Vanclay, 1994). Son rôle est par contre plus important pour les plantations que dans les peuplements inéquiennes (Vanclay, 1994). Les taux de mortalité sont généralement spécifiques aux espèces (Wunder *et al.*, 2008) et l'âge peut être un facteur contribuant à la mort d'un arbre, sans toutefois en être une cause directe (Vanclay, 1994).

Les études empiriques démontrent également que la mortalité peut varier selon l'espèce. Par exemple, Coates (1997) ainsi que Canham, Papaik et Latty (2001) rapportent des différences de sensibilité au chablis entre les espèces. La taille de l'arbre peut aussi être importante : Caspersen (2006) et Martin (2008) ont trouvé que la mortalité après coupe de jardinage touchait principalement les petites classes de diamètre.

Les perturbations liées à la coupe pourraient avoir des effets différents selon l'espèce et la taille des arbres. Tel que mentionné précédemment, la sévérité des abrasions sur le tronc des arbres dépend de l'espèce (Lavalée et Lortie, 1968; Smith, Miller et Schuler, 1994), auquel s'ajoute la taille de l'arbre : à surface égale, une blessure sera plus sévère sur un arbre de plus petit diamètre (Boulet, 2005). Nyland (1994) mentionne d'ailleurs que les blessures d'exploitation détruisent généralement les petits arbres (10 à 13 cm) et qu'une perte d'environ 15 % des arbres de cette classe de taille est à prévoir, même lorsque les opérations sont réalisés avec soin.

De plus, la réaction des arbres au possible stress hydrique causé par la compaction du sol et le bris de racines pourrait être différente selon l'espèce. Tubbs (1977) a observé que le système racinaire de l'érable à sucre était plutôt distribué uniformément, alors que les racines du bouleau jaune étaient fréquemment situées d'un même côté. Le stress pourrait donc être plus important pour cette dernière espèce, car plus de racines seraient endommagées advenant que la machinerie circule à cet endroit.

0.3 Objectifs et hypothèses

La présente recherche s'intègre dans un projet pancanadien du Réseau de gestion durable des forêts (Sustainable Forest Management Network) portant sur la mortalité des arbres après coupe partielle. Il s'agit de la première étude à grande échelle dédiée à cette problématique au Canada, dont les principaux objectifs sont les suivants : 1) décrire le patron temporel de la mortalité après coupe partielle; 2) identifier les principales causes de mortalité; 3) quantifier la mortalité séparément selon l'espèce et la taille des arbres; 4) développer des modèles de prévision. L'atteinte de ces objectifs permettrait donc une meilleure estimation du rendement de nos forêts à long terme, ce qui s'inscrit dans une perspective d'aménagement durable. De plus, une meilleure compréhension des causes de mortalité servirait ultimement à développer des stratégies afin de les éviter.

Dans cette étude, nous avons cherché à atteindre les 3 premiers objectifs mentionnés plus haut, pour la coupe de jardinage pratiquée au Québec. Malheureusement, il s'est avéré impossible d'obtenir de bons estimés de

l'année de mort des arbres par des analyses dendrochronologiques. En conséquence, il n'a pas été possible de dresser le patron temporel de la mortalité après coupe de jardinage et le premier objectif a donc été écarté.

Plus spécifiquement, nous avons testé les hypothèses suivantes : 1) les blessures et dommages causés par les opérations forestières sont responsables d'une part non négligeable de la mortalité après coupe de jardinage; 2) les causes de mortalité sont différentes entre les espèces et entre les classes de diamètre; 3) les blessures infligées au système racinaire des arbres et la diminution de la disponibilité de l'eau dans le sol due à la compaction peut induire un stress hydrique important chez les arbres en bordure de sentier et 4) ce stress sera plus important pour les arbres en bordure de sentiers primaires, où la machinerie circule plusieurs fois, que pour ceux en bordure de sentier secondaire, où la machinerie ne passe qu'une ou deux fois. Les deux premières hypothèses font l'objet du chapitre 1, alors que les deux autres sont incluses dans le chapitre 2.

CHAPITRE I

CAUSES OF RESIDUAL TREE MORTALITY AND DEADWOOD STRUCTURE FOLLOWING SELECTION HARVEST IN SUGAR MAPLE- DOMINATED FORESTS

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1.1 Abstract

Periodic re-entries into the same forest stand in partial harvest systems are a concern because residual trees are subjected to repeated logging damage and harvest-related stresses. This study was undertaken to evaluate the effects of these disturbances on tree mortality and identify possible predisposing factors in sugar maple-dominated stands subjected to selection harvest. Multivariate regression tree analysis formed two groups of dead trees based on their distance to skid trail. Indicator species analysis revealed that skidding and felling damage as well as unknown cause of death were associated with trailside trees. Overall, 21% of dead trees died of skidding and felling damage and 26% of unknown causes. Tree size and species were identified as predisposing factors: mortality was higher in smaller diameter classes and for yellow birch, which was also found to be more sensitive to logging and felling damage. Harvest-induced mortality and disproportionality among size classes and species may have long-term negative impacts on forest structure and composition, as they may be responsible for up to 47% of residual tree mortality after selection harvest.

KEYWORDS: selection harvest, tree mortality, skid trail, sugar maple, yellow birch, multivariate regression tree, indicator species analysis

1.2 Résumé

Dans les systèmes de coupes partielles, les opérations forestières réalisées périodiquement dans un même peuplement sont une source de préoccupation, puisque les arbres résiduels sont soumis de façon répétitive à des blessures d'exploitation et à des stress occasionnés par la récolte. Le but de cette étude était d'évaluer l'incidence de ces perturbations sur la mortalité des arbres ainsi que de repérer des facteurs prédisposants possibles pour des érablières jardinées. Un arbre de régression multivariable a permis de former deux groupes d'arbres en fonction de leur distance par rapport au sentier de débardage. L'analyse des espèces indicatrices a révélé que les blessures d'exploitation ainsi que les causes de mortalité inconnues étaient associées aux arbres en bordure des sentiers. Dans l'ensemble, les blessures d'exploitation ont été associées à la mort de 21 % des arbres et les causes inconnues à 26 % des arbres. La taille des arbres et leur espèce ont été cernées comme facteurs prédisposants : la mortalité était supérieure dans les classes de diamètre inférieures et chez le bouleau jaune, qui a aussi été trouvé plus sensible aux blessures d'exploitation. La mortalité liée aux perturbations de la récolte et la disproportion entre les classes de taille et les espèces pourraient avoir des effets négatifs à long terme sur la structure et la composition du peuplement, pouvant être responsables de près de 47 % de la mortalité après coupe de jardinage.

MOTS-CLÉS : coupe de jardinage, mortalité des arbres, sentier de débardage, érable à sucre, bouleau jaune, arbre de régression multivariable, analyse des espèces indicatrices

1.3 Introduction

Selection silviculture is the most widely used management system in Quebec's uneven-aged hardwood forests. In this system, periodic harvests target trees of low vigour to increase stand quality and improve growth of residual trees through competition release (Bédard et Majcen, 2001), while reducing mortality (Guillemette et Bédard, 2006). Gaps created by the removal of individual trees or small groups of trees emulate the natural disturbance dynamic of this ecosystem and favour regeneration (Lorimer, 1980; Payette, Filion et Delwaide, 1990). Based on experimental results, removal of one third of stand basal area on a 15- to 20-year cutting cycle has been recommended to maintain an all-aged stand structure in Quebec's forests (Majcen et Bédard, 2000).

Operational use of the selection system has showed less positive results: yields achieved in stands under industrial management (on public land) were 60% lower than expected due to mortality rates twice as high as in the experiments (Bédard et Brassard, 2002). Moreover, 79% of dead trees in this study had low vigour at the time of harvest raising questions about the efficiency of marking guidelines (Bédard et Brassard, 2002; Meunier *et al.*, 2002). However, studies have shown that both the classification system initially used in Quebec (Majcen, 1990) and the one currently in use (Boulet, 2005) provide a generally good assessment of survival probabilities (Hartmann, Beaudet et Messier, 2008; Guillemette, Bedard et Fortin, 2008; Fortin *et al.*, 2008).

Even when ideal tree marking is achieved, repeated interventions in the same forest stand in partial harvest systems are of concern due to the potential damage to residual trees during logging operations (Cline *et al.*, 1991; Vasiliauskas, 2001; Nyland, 2002). Direct damage includes loss of a few branches (Nyland et Gabriel, 1971), broken tops (Miller, Lamson et Brock, 1984) and sapwood exposing wounds on bole and roots (Lamson, Smith et Miller, 1985). Furthermore, some trees are completely destroyed with the main stem being bent over or completely broken off.

Damage to tops and branches may decrease growth potential (Nyland, 1994) as foliage loss reduces photosynthetic capacity, while wounds serve as infection courts for wood rotting fungi and other pathogens that may lead to discoloration and decay (Hesterberg, 1957; Shigo, 1966; Lavallee et Lortie, 1968). Stem injuries can also reduce diameter growth, as they partially girdle the tree (Lamson et Smith, 1988). Although trees are able to close wounds and compartmentalize decay (Shigo et Marx, 1977), healing is a slow process and its success depends on tree age and wound size and severity. Any decay or discoloration reduces wood quality, but large injuries can also lead to reduced vigour. Nyland and Gabriel (1971) report that 25% of the residual basal area was severely injured during partial harvest, with basal wounds found on 70% of the trailside trees.

The use of heavy machinery during logging operations and the removal of single trees may also stress residual trees. Skidders and mechanical fellers often create soil compaction (Brais et Camiré, 1998; Kozłowski, 1999) and damage the root system (Cline *et al.*, 1991; Nadezhdina *et al.*, 2006) resulting in reduced water uptake of trailside trees (see Chapter 2). Soil compaction also reduces root growth (Malo, 2009) possibly reducing healing capacity of

the root system. Moreover, the sudden opening of the forest canopy created by the removal of trees markedly increases light availability (Canham *et al.*, 1990; Beaudet et Messier, 2002). Although higher light interception usually leads to higher growth rates (Wyckoff et Clark, 2005), it also increases evapotranspiration and thus water demands (Breda, Granier et Aussenac, 1995) and could also induce water stress.

The objectives of this study were to: (1) evaluate the importance of harvest disturbance and identify the causes of mortality after selection cut; (2) assess factors, such as tree size or species, that could predispose certain trees to mortality and (3) discuss possible implications for sustainable management of uneven-aged hardwood forests.

1.4 Material and methods

1.4.1 Study sites

The study sites were located in the Eastern Townships within 100 km around the city of Sherbrooke in southern Quebec (Canada, 45° 26' N, 71° 41' W), on private holdings. The region is part of the sugar maple-basswood and sugar maple-yellow birch domains (Robitaille et Saucier, 1998). Mean temperature varies between 2.5 °C and 5 °C while total annual precipitation averages 1000 to 1100 mm, of which approximately 25% to 30% falls as snow.

Uneven-aged hardwood forests that had been previously harvested using selection cuts (from 1995 to 2006) were chosen in order to create a

chronosequence of time after harvest. At least two different harvested stands were selected for each harvest year. Logging operations removed, on average, 28% of the initial stand basal area (BA, m²/ha). Dominant canopy composition was: sugar maple (ACSA, *Acer saccharum* Marsh., 65% of BA), yellow birch (BEAL, *Betula alleghaniensis* Britton, 11%), red maple (ACRU, *Acer rubrum* L., 8%), American beech (*Fagus grandifolia* Ehrh., 5%), eastern hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis* [L.] Carr., 3.8%) and white ash (*Fraxinus americana* L., 3.7%). Other species included balsam fir (*Abies balsamea* [L.] P.Mill.), red spruce (*Picea rubens* Sarg.), black cherry (*Prunus serotina* Ehrh.), American basswood (*Tilia americana* L.), striped maple (*Acer pensylvanicum* L.), paper birch (*Betula papyrifera* Marsh.), black ash (*Fraxinus nigra* Marsh.) and quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides* Michx.) in minor proportions (less than 1% of BA, Table 1.1).

1.4.2 Study plots

In 2006 and 2007, a total of 159 plots were sampled during the summer. Three different types of plots were used: 400 m² permanent sample plots (PSP; n=39), variable-sized relascope plots (BAF=2, n=114) and 0.25 ha plots (50 m x 50 m, n=6). Sampling of PSPs allowed the use of forest inventory data collected from previous measurements while relascope plots were chosen to maximize the number of trees sampled in areas where no prior information was available. The six 0.25 ha were established in one stand as part of another study (see chapter 2). Measurements were standardized to "trees per hectare" before statistical analyses were performed. Plots were all

located within sugar maple-dominated stands with flat terrain or gentle slopes and good to moderate drainage.

1.4.3 Data collection

Within each plot, diameter at breast height (DBH) of all commercially sized trees (DBH > 9 cm, live and dead) and diameter at stump height (DSH; stump height \approx 0.5 m above ground) of all stumps from the harvest were measured and identified to species. Every dead tree was carefully examined and assigned to a decay class (DC 1 to 5, adapted from Angers *et al.*, 2005; Moroni, 2006) based on physical characteristics such as wood firmness, amount of remaining bark and presence of large and fine branches (see Table 1.2).

For each dead tree, distance to the nearest skid trail was measured (in 2007 only) using a Vertex III Ultrasonic Hypsometer (Hagl f, L ngsele, Sweden). One to multiple causes of mortality were also assigned to each dead tree based on a detailed examination of mortality symptoms and bole defects (Boulet, 2005). Seven likely causes of mortality were identified: windthrow, fungal infection, insect damage, skidding and felling damage, bole defect, stem snap and root rot. Trees for which no cause of death could be inferred (no defect, no wood decay) were placed in an eighth category ("unknown"). A dead tree could be placed in more than one category with the exception of the "unknown" category.

1.4.4 Statistical analysis

We tried to determine the exact year of death through dendrochronological analysis but were not able to cross-date samples due to weak master chronologies. Therefore, decay classes were used as a proxy of time-since-death. Only recently dead trees in decay classes 1 and 2 (n=168) were used for the analysis for two reasons: (1) cause of death is difficult to assess when wood is highly decomposed and (2) most trees in DC 1 and 2 likely died after harvest, especially in older harvest years.

Sum-of-squares-based multivariate regression trees (SS-MRT; (De'ath, 2002) were used to explore the relationships between the causes of mortality and structural and environmental characteristics. This method is typically used for the analysis of ecological communities (with species data, e.g. Jacobs, Spence and Langor (2007)). The SS-MRT is a method of constrained clustering (McCune et Grace, 2002) that forms clusters by repeated splitting of the data based on environmental variables. At each split, a specific environmental variable and a division point along that variable are selected, thus creating nodes. The splits are chosen to minimize the sum of squared distances of samples (dead trees) from the centroids of the nodes to which they belong (De'ath, 2002). Unlike other direct classification methods, this method makes no assumptions of unimodal or linear distributions along the environmental gradients. The causes of mortality of dead trees were compared with characteristics of the trees (species, DBH, DC) and environmental variables (time since harvest, distance to a skid trail, proportion of BA harvested, residual BA). Only dead trees with a measure of distance to a skid trail (n=86) were used for this analysis.

Indicator species analysis (ISA) (Dufrêne et Legendre, 1997) was then used to identify the causes of mortality that were statistically significant indicators of the groups formed by the SS-MRT. ISA calculates indicator values (IV) for each cause of mortality in each group, by multiplying its relative frequency (fidelity) and its relative abundance (specificity). Relative frequency is high when the cause is found in the majority of the dead trees of the group while relative abundance is high when the cause is found mostly in a single group (relatively to the other groups). IV ranges from 0 (poor indicator) to 100 (perfect indicator) and its significance was evaluated with a Monte Carlo test using 5000 permutations.

ISA can be used either on abundance or presence/absence data (Dufrêne et Legendre, 1997; Bakker, 2008). Although McCune and Grace (2002) mention that indicator species analysis is applicable only to species data, because it is based on concepts of abundance and frequency that do not make sense for most other kinds of data, our use of binary data (presence/absence of a mortality cause on a dead tree) means that indicator values represented the fidelity of a cause of mortality to a group and the constancy of presence in this group relative to other groups. Also, we used ISA only to determine which causes of mortality defined the clusters formed by the MRT and made no predictions with the results.

Student's *t*-test was used to compare mean DBH of live and dead trees and determine if tree size had an influence on tree mortality. Chi-square analysis was used to compare proportion of dead trees and proportion of harvest damage between the three main species (ACSA, ACRU and BEAL). All statistical analyses were performed using the R statistical language (R Development Core Team, 2009). The multivariate regression tree was

computed using the “mvpart” library (Therneau et Atkinson 2005), whereas indicator species analysis was computed using the duleg algorithm from the “labdsv” library (Roberts, 2007). Significance level was $\alpha = 0.05$.

1.5 Results

1.5.1 Causes of tree mortality after harvest

The SS-MRT consistently produced a tree with 2 terminal nodes, explaining 8.4% of the variation in the data based on distance to the skid trail (Fig. 1.1). The split separates trees close to a skid trail (left node, <3.18m) from trees located farther away from a trail (right node, >3.18m). ISA revealed that machinery-induced mortality (skidding and felling damage) and unknown causes were significant indicators for the left cluster (Table 1.3), while fungal infection and bole defect were significant indicators of the right cluster. Of the 86 trees used in this analysis, 21% died of skidding or felling damage and 26% showed no defect or wood decay (unknown cause of mortality; Table 1.4).

1.5.2 Predisposing factors to mortality

Tree size was statistically significantly related to mortality. Dead trees were, on average, smaller than live trees ($t = 2.2239$, $df = 186.123$, $p = 0.027$); mean DBH was 25.61 cm for live trees compared to 23.56 cm for dead trees.

As shown in Figure 1.2, proportion of dead trees is highest in the 10-20 cm class.

Mortality also varied among tree species. There was a statistically significant difference in proportion of dead trees between the three main species ($\chi^2 = 33.9983$, $df = 2$, $p = <0.001$; Fig. 1.3). The proportion of dead yellow birches (12%) was twice as high as the proportion of dead red maples (6%; $\chi^2 = 4.6739$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.031$) and three times as high as the proportion of dead sugar maples (4%; $\chi^2 = 34.1713$, $df = 1$, $p = <0.001$). However, the difference between red maple and sugar maple was not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 1.6075$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.205$). Machinery-induced mortality (skidding and felling damage) was also higher for yellow birch (30%) compared to sugar maple (8%; $\chi^2 = 8.2281$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.004$; Fig. 1.4). Although there was a higher proportion of unknown cause of mortality for yellow birch (28% vs. 22%), the difference was not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 0.2954$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.587$).

1.6 Discussion

1.6.1 Causes of tree mortality after harvest

Tree mortality is a complex phenomenon, as death is often the result of the cumulative effect of two or more causes (Manion, 1991). For example, root rot has been shown to increase susceptibility to windfall and mortality after partial harvest (Gordon, 1973; Whitney *et al.*, 2002) while beech bark disease severely reduces resistance to windthrow (Papaik *et al.*, 2005). This study provides an innovative method for the assessment of multiple causes of

mortality and the related environmental factors, using multivariate analysis. Although multivariate regression trees and indicator species analysis are usually performed on large species datasets, their use in this study enabled us to identify groups sharing similar causes of mortality as well as the associated environmental factor.

Proximity to a skid trail was found to be the most important factor grouping causes of mortality. Two causes of mortality were found more often on trailside trees (distance < 3.18 m): skidding and felling damage and unknown cause. The explanation for the first is straightforward: trees have to be located near skid trails to suffer from skidding damage and the probability of being damaged decreases as distance to a skid trail increases (Fajvan, Knipling et Tift, 2002; Dwyer *et al.*, 2004). However, felling damage is not limited to trailside trees. Since these two kinds of damage were classified as the same cause, the fact that it is a significant indicator for the group of dead trees close to a skid trail suggests that skidding damage is more important than felling damage. This is consistent with studies reporting that most of the damage to residual trees occurs during transport of timber (Vasiliauskas, 2001).

More interesting is the higher incidence of unknown causes of death in proximity to skid trails. This may represent trees that died of harvest disturbance other than direct damage to branches and bole. Water stress induced by soil compaction (Brais et Camiré, 1998; Kozłowski, 1999; Komatsu *et al.*, 2007) and damage to the root system (Cline *et al.*, 1991; Nadezhdina *et al.*, 2006) and/or sudden canopy opening may be responsible for part of this mortality. Since water stress does not leave any symptom on

the bole, trees that died of this cause would be placed in the "unknown" category.

The observed proportion of dead trees that died of skidding and felling damage (21%) is similar to the proportion of major injuries (25%) reported by Nyland and Gabriel (1971). However, it is worth pointing out that we were very conservative in the attribution of this cause of mortality. Trees had to be positioned close to a skid trail or in the felling direction of a cut tree. Since they can be difficult to locate after several years, many dead trees may have been left out of this category. Although dead trees in the unknown category may have died of other causes (e.g. natural senescence, other stresses, defects missed during visual assessment of cause of mortality), at least some of the 26% mortality in the unknown category is likely to result from harvest-related stresses. Thus, harvest disturbance (direct and indirect) may be responsible for up to 47% of the mortality after harvest. However, this percentage does not take into account natural mortality that would have occurred even if the stands were not harvested. Therefore, caution should be taken when interpreting this result.

Other studies have reported a significant influence of harvest disturbance on tree growth and mortality. Hartmann *et al.* (2009) found that sugar maple growth was reduced by proximity to skid trails 10 years after selection harvest. Radial growth rate was negatively correlated with distance to a skid trail for trees closer than 12 m. In the boreal forest of Ontario, Thorpe, Thomas and Caspersen (2008) found that residual tree mortality was 12.6 times the pre-harvest rate in the first year after a partial harvest and that proximity to skid trail was the most important predictor of postharvest mortality. About 10.5% of residual trees died within 10 years after harvest.

Martin (2008) has shown that direct impacts of skidding and felling operations were the primary cause of death following selection harvest in a hardwood forest of Ontario and that the annual mortality rate in the first two years was 3.2%, a rate higher than the mean mortality in natural stands.

1.6.2 Predisposing factors to mortality

Smaller trees were more susceptible to mortality than larger trees. This is consistent with what has been reported in other studies on mortality after partial harvest. Caspersen (2006) found that the mortality rate of small trees (DBH < 10 cm) in hardwood forests increased by 5% after the surrounding forest was harvested. However, this study was undertaken in an experimental forest where trees were felled but not skidded out of the stands. Therefore, reported mortality rates are likely to be lower than in stands subjected to skidding damage. Our results also indicate that trees smaller than 25 cm accounted for 60.3% of the total mortality observations, which is very similar to what Martin (2008) found in Ontario where pole-size trees (10.1-25 cm) represented 64.5% of total dead trees.

Although our study does not provide a precise assessment of mortality rates for small trees, their higher susceptibility to mortality is a concern because of the potential alteration of the diameter distribution on the long term. Success of the selection system relies on a balanced and stable structure, that is, the inverse "J" shape distribution with high numbers of stems in small diameter classes and a progressive decrease as diameter increases (Arbogast Jr, 1957; Majcen, 1990). Disproportionate increases in the mortality rates of pole-

size trees may result in structural instability and unsustainable yield targets (Hansen et Nyland, 1987; Nyland, 1994).

Tree species was also a predisposing factor to mortality. Yellow birch showed the highest proportion of dead trees in DC 1 and 2 (12%), well above red maple (6%) and sugar maple (4%). In addition, birch trees showed a higher incidence of mortality caused by skidding and felling damage than maples, a result also reported by Martin (2008). This is either because a greater number of birch trees were initially injured and, consequently, more birch trees died due to machinery damage, or, yellow birch is more sensitive to damage. Unfortunately we did not measure logging damage on live trees and therefore cannot compare the proportion of injured trees for each species. The second argument is more likely; yellow birch is less shade-tolerant than sugar maple and it may allocate more carbon to growth and less to defense (DeLucia *et al.*, 1998; Imaji et Seiwa, 2010). Furthermore, studies investigating the effects of wound size and occurrence of decay have shown that smaller wounds of yellow birch have the same probability of developing decay as larger wounds of sugar maple (Hesterberg, 1957; Lavallee et Lortie, 1968). Yellow birch's higher mortality rates and higher sensitivity to machinery damage may impair sustainable production of high-quality wood of this species under management with the selection system.

1.7 Conclusion

Logging damage is an important concern in partial harvest systems. Even with good logging practices, some residual trees will inevitably be damaged

by machinery and felled trees. Furthermore, this damage may lead to tree death. Unequal proportions of dead trees between diameter classes and species may have long-term impacts on forest structure and composition. In this study, we have shown that mortality was higher in small size classes and for yellow birch after selection harvest. Although long-term studies are needed to quantify this mortality (rates per year) and assess the sustainability of this management system, our results suggest that machinery damage and related stresses may be the cause of death of almost half of recently dead trees.

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1.9 Figures

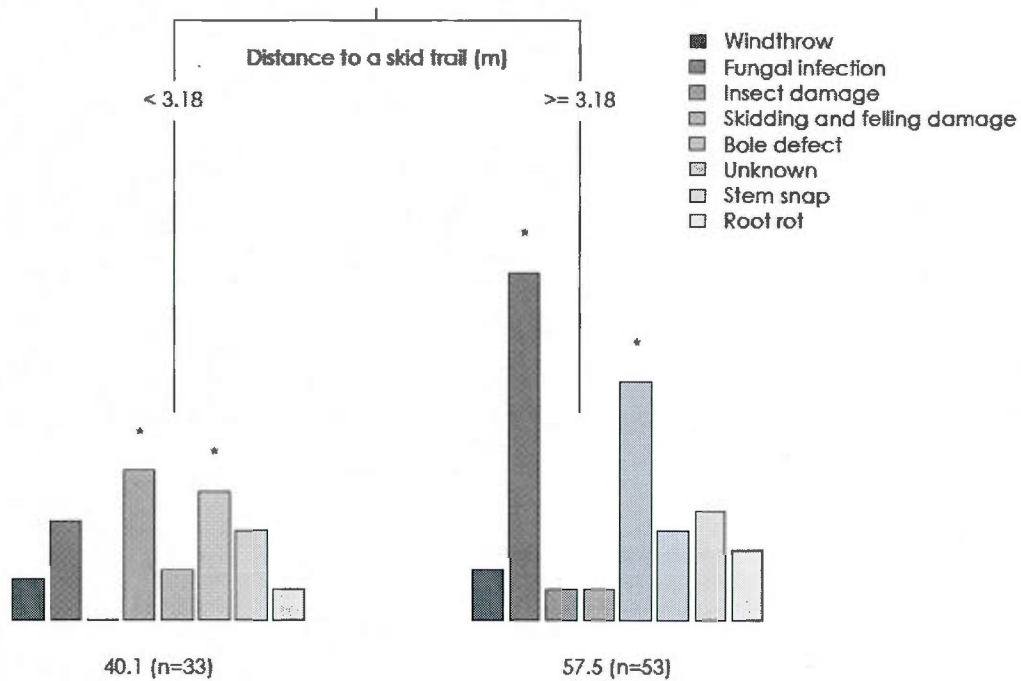


Figure 1.1 The sum of squares-based multivariate regression tree (SS-MRT) defining two groups of dead trees with similar causes of mortality in terms of distance to a skid trail. The bar plots at the terminal nodes show the distribution of causes of mortality, each vertical bar representing the total number of dead trees for each cause. Numbers under the bar plots indicate the impurity measure (residual sum of squares) and the size (number of dead trees) of each group. Asterisks show causes with significant indicator value in each group.

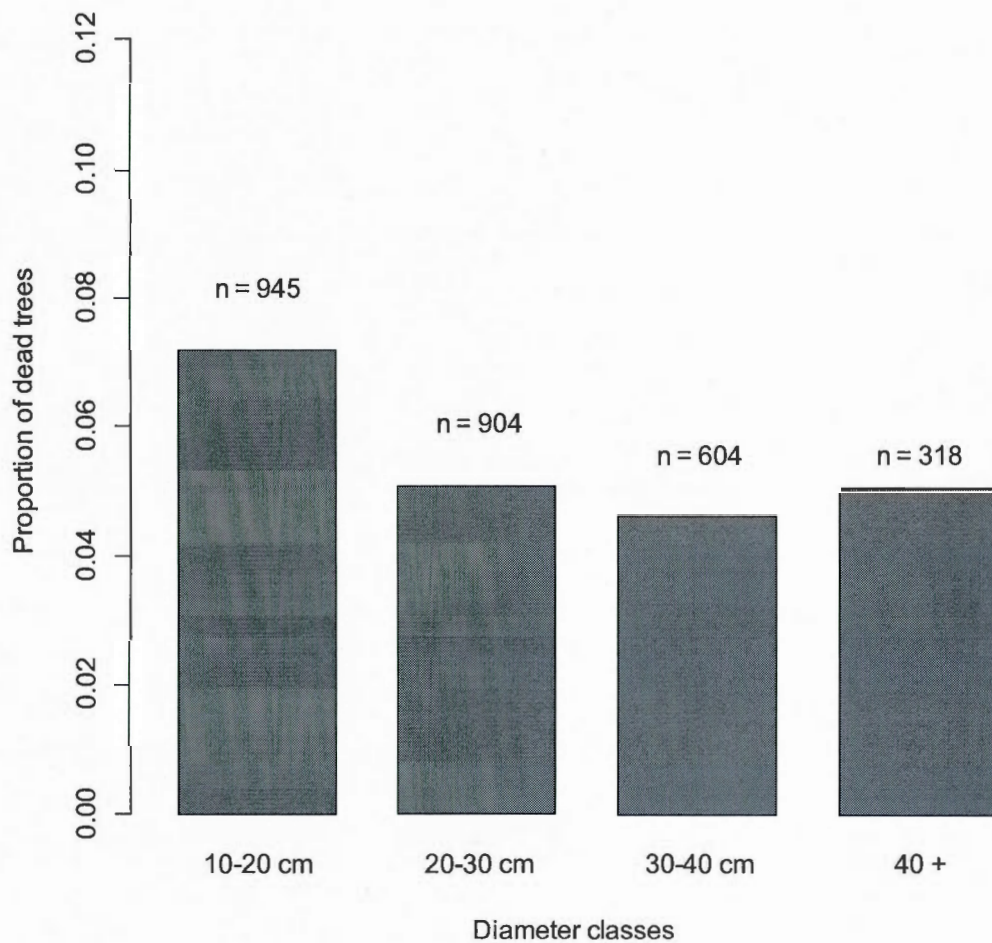


Figure 1.2 Proportion of dead trees of all species across four diameter classes (cm). Numbers above bars represent size (total number of trees) of each class.

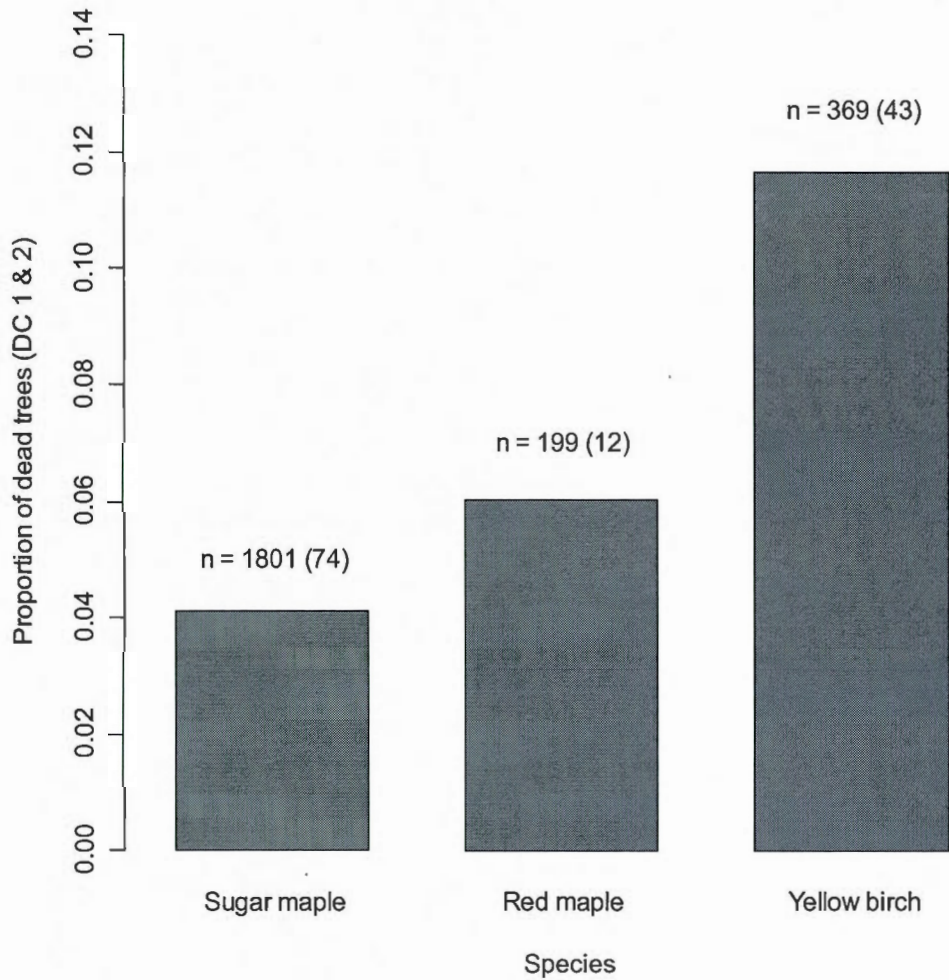


Figure 1.3 Proportion of dead trees (decay classes 1 and 2) of the three main species. Numbers above bars represent size (total number of trees) for each species. Values in parentheses represent number of dead trees in decay classes 1 and 2.

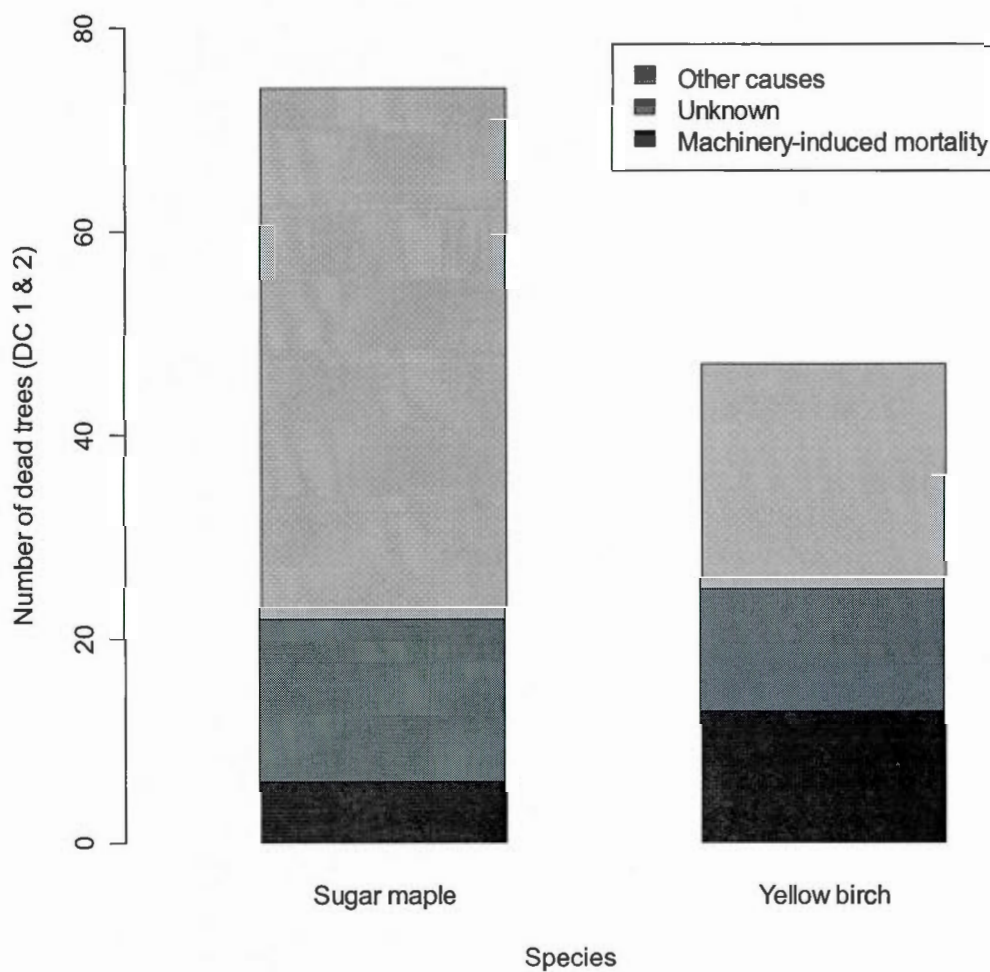


Figure 1.4 Number of dead trees (decay classes 1 and 2) per mortality cause for sugar maple and yellow birch. A statistically significant difference in machinery-induced mortality was found between the two species ($\chi^2 = 8.2281$, $df = 1$, p -value = 0.004).

1.10 Tables

Table 1.1 Total observations for dead trees, live trees and stumps for each species.

Species	Total nb of dead trees	Total nb of live trees	Total nb of stumps
<i>Acer saccharum</i>	152	1725	337
<i>Betula alleghaniensis</i>	137	326	101
<i>Acer rubrum</i>	40	187	59
<i>Fagus grandifolia</i>	27	161	54
<i>Abies balsamea</i>	17	36	19
<i>Picea rubens</i>	12	26	5
<i>Tsuga canadensis</i>	11	67	17
<i>Acer pensylvanicum</i>	8	9	0
<i>Fraxinus americana</i>	6	100	21
<i>Prunus serotina</i>	3	13	5
<i>Betula papyrifera</i>	3	8	3
<i>Prunus pensylvanica</i>	3	0	1
<i>Thuja occidentalis</i>	2	1	1
<i>Tilia americana</i>	1	12	4
<i>Fraxinus nigra</i>	1	6	0
<i>Populus grandidentata</i>	1	0	0
<i>Populus tremuloides</i>	0	5	1
<i>Acer saccharinum</i>	0	2	1
<i>Ostrya virginiana</i>	0	1	1
<i>Fraxinus pennsylvanica</i>	0	1	0
<i>Ulmus rubra</i>	0	1	0
<i>Carpinus caroliniana</i>	0	1	0
<i>Amelanchier ssp</i>	0	1	0
Unknown species	7	0	12
Total	431	2689	642

Table 1.2 Classification of the stage of decay (adapted from Angers *et al.* (2005) and Moroni (2006)).

	Decay class				
	1	2	3	4	5
Tree top	Intact, recently dead	Intact	Intact or broken	Broken top, at least 6 m in height	Broken top, at least 6 m in height
Buds and twigs	Twigs present, buds may be present	No twigs or buds	No twigs or buds	No twigs or buds	No twigs or buds
Coarse branches	100%	> 50%	< 50%	0%	0%
Bark	100%, tight bark	50-75%, loosening	< 50%	0%	0%
Wood firmness	Hard wood	Hard wood	A blade can penetrate the outer layer (2-3 cm)	A blade can easily penetrate the outer layer (4-5 cm)	Well decayed wood (> 5 cm)

Table 1.3 Indicator values (IV), relative abundance, relative frequency and probabilities for the mortality causes that are significant indicators of SS-MRT groups. Cluster 1 represent the left node and cluster 2 the right node (Figure 1.1).

Causes	Cluster	Ind. value	Rel. abundance (%)	Rel. frequency (%)	P
Skidding and felling damage	1	40	88.9	45.5	0.001
Unknown	1	28	69.9	39.4	0.014
Fungal infection	2	45	68.5	66	0.004
Bole defect	2	34	74.9	45.3	0.010

Table 1.4 Number of observations and proportion of dead trees for each cause of mortality, for the 86 trees used in the SS-MRT.

Causes	Nb of observations	Proportion of dead trees
Windthrow	9	0.10
Fungal infection	45	0.52
Insect damage	3	0.03
Skidding and felling damage	18	0.21
Bole defect	29	0.34
Unknown	22	0.26
Stem snap	20	0.23
Root rot	10	0.12

CHAPITRE II

SUGAR MAPLE WATER STATUS FOLLOWING SELECTION HARVEST: EFFECTS OF HEAVY MACHINERY-INDUCED BELOWGROUND DISTURBANCE

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2.1 Abstract

This study analyses the effects of machinery-induced belowground disturbance on water status of residual sugar maples in a selectively harvested stand. Heavy machinery causes soil compaction and root breakage possibly leading to water stress in trailside trees. Sap flow of individual sugar maple trees (*Acer saccharum* Marsh.) was measured using sap flow sensors in a hardwood forest that had undergone a selection cut the previous fall. Trees were chosen to create a gradient of distances to the trails. A circular influence zone was estimated around each tree and the percentage of this zone under trail(s) was calculated (MD). A segmented linear regression revealed declines in sap flow after a threshold of 18.17% MD. Linear mixed-effects models showed that while belowground disturbance had no effect on sap flow below that threshold, beyond that each 1% increase in MD led to a 1.8% decrease in sap flow. For a tree with 40.26% MD (mean observed value), this represents a 39.76% decrease, a reduction similar to what has been observed during drought periods in other studies. No difference was found between trees close to primary and secondary trails, suggesting that most of the belowground disturbance occurred during the first machinery pass. These results indicate that even under favourable climatic conditions, which prevailed during the sampling period, machinery-induced disturbance can induce important water stress in residual trees in proximity to skid trails.

KEYWORDS: *Acer saccharum*, sap flow density, heavy machinery, belowground disturbance, selection harvest

2.2 Résumé

Nous avons étudié l'effet des perturbations liées à la machinerie lourde sur le bilan hydrique d'arbres résiduels dans une érablière jardinée. Le passage de la machinerie dans les sentiers de débardage perturbe le sol et brise des racines, causant possiblement un stress hydrique chez les arbres situés près des sentiers. Le flux de sève d'érables à sucre (*Acer saccharum* Marsh.) a été mesuré à l'aide de capteurs de flux de sève dans une érablière soumise à une coupe de jardinage l'automne précédent. Les érables ont été choisis de façon à former un gradient de distance au sentier. Une zone d'influence circulaire a été estimée autour de chacun des arbres et le pourcentage de cette zone sous un sentier a été calculé (MD). Une régression linéaire segmentée a montré une diminution du flux de sève après un seuil MD de 18,17 %. Des modèles mixtes linéaires ont révélés que bien que les perturbations n'avaient pas d'effet sur le flux de sève sous cette valeur seuil, une augmentation de 1 % de MD après le seuil entraînait une diminution de 1.8 % du flux de sève. Pour un arbre avec 40.26 % de MD, ceci représente une diminution de 39,76 %, valeur comparable à ce qui a été observé durant des périodes de sécheresse dans d'autres études. Aucune différence n'été observée entre les arbres près de sentiers primaires et ceux près de sentiers secondaires. Ceci suggère que la majorité des dommages sont causés par le premier passage de machinerie. Ces résultats indiquent que même sous des conditions climatiques favorables, telles que celles observées durant la période d'échantillonnage, les perturbations liées à la machinerie peuvent causer un stress hydrique important chez les arbres en bordure de sentiers.

MOTS-CLÉS : *Acer saccharum*, flux de sève, machinerie lourde, perturbations, coupe de jardinage

2.3 Introduction

Partial harvest systems aim to sustain high-quality timber production with minimal disruption to canopy cover, thus helping to preserve other forest values such as wildlife habitats, environmental benefits, recreation and aesthetics (Pommerening and Murphy, 2004). Removal of single trees or small groups of trees is expected to increase growth and reduce mortality in residual trees through increased nutrient, water and light availability, i.e. competitive release (Smith *et al.*, 1997; Jones and Thomas, 2004). However, residual stands are subjected to logging damage of various kinds during harvest operations which can compromise the integrity of the site and might therefore impair the fulfillment of management objectives (Froehlich, 1979; Matthews, 1989; Anderson, 1994; Worrell and Hampson, 1997). In addition to direct damage to residual trees (branch breakage, scraping of the bark and the underlying cambium, stem wounds, etc.), heavy machinery used during logging operations often causes soil compaction (Brais and Camiré, 1998; Kozłowski, 1999; Miller, Colbert and Morris, 2004) and damage to the root system (Cline *et al.*, 1991; Nadezhdina *et al.*, 2006).

Soil compaction alters soil structure and hydrology resulting in decreased soil porosity, aeration and water infiltration capacity (Kozłowski, 1999). Reduced seedling survival and growth (Maynard and Senyk, 2004; Blouin *et al.*, 2008) and decreased tree growth (Grigal, 2000; Gomez *et al.*, 2002; Zhao *et al.*, 2010) have been observed in compacted soil. Root growth and elongation is also generally reduced (Taylor and Brar, 1991; Whalley, Dumitru and Dexter,

1995; Starsev and McNabb, 2001; Malo, 2009) and, as with root damage can lead to water stress (Nadezhdina *et al.*, 2006; Komatsu *et al.*, 2007).

Water plays a major role in tree physiology (Kozlowski and Pallardy, 1997), as transpiration is strongly linked to photosynthesis. In non-limiting soil water conditions, transpiration is strongly dependant on vapour pressure deficit (VPD) and global radiation (Tan, Black and Nnyamah, 1978; Granier and Bréda, 1996). When water uptake is reduced (as a result of low soil water availability or root damage), stomata closure (Jarvis and McNaughton, 1986) limits photosynthesis and may therefore reduce tree growth through decreased carbon assimilation (Hanson and Hitz, 1982).

In this study we assess the impact of heavy machinery-induced belowground disturbance on stem sap flow density in sugar maple (*Acer saccharum* Marsh.) trees following selection harvest. It is important to note that here belowground disturbance includes both soil compaction and root damage. Therefore, when we refer to the proportion of the root system affected by machinery or to the percentage of disturbed root system, it incorporates both types of disturbance.

Our first hypothesis is that sap flow density will decrease as a larger proportion of the root system is affected by machinery, above a certain threshold. Many studies have reported various thresholds in the effects of root damage on tree physiology. O'Brien *et al.* (2010) reported a threshold of 31% studying the effect of forest floor consumption following fire on sap flux of longleaf pines. Nadezhdina *et al.* (2006) noted that sap flow in coarse roots below heavy machinery trails responded only when a significant part of the root system was under the tires. We thus expect to see negligible sap flow

reduction for trees with small proportions of disturbed root system. The second hypothesis is that the reduction in sap flow will be more important for trees close to primary trail compared to secondary trails. Primary trails are created by the repeated passages of cable skidders and feller bunchers, while secondary trails are a result of the movement of the feller buncher around trees to cut marked ones. The latter implies that secondary trails may generate less damage as only one or two machinery runs are required.

2.4 Material and methods

2.4.1 Study site

The study area is located in the Eastern Townships in southern Quebec (Canada, 45° 38' N, 70° 36' W, elevation 582 m). The region is part of the sugar maple-yellow birch bioclimatic domain (Robitaille and Saucier, 1998). Total annual precipitation averages 1000 to 1100 mm (70% as rain) while mean temperature is 2.5 °C. Growing degree-days range from 2400 to 2600 DD. Soil is derived from glacial deposits ranging in depth from 0.25 to 1.00 m (Robitaille and Saucier, 1998). The study site was established in an uneven-aged hardwood forest located on a moderate north-facing slope. The stand was selectively harvested at the end of summer 2006 where 28% of the initial stand basal area (BA, m²/ha) was removed. Dominant canopy species was composed of sugar maple (*Acer saccharum* Marsh., 93% of total BA), yellow birch (*Betula alleghaniensis* Britton, 4%) and American beech (*Fagus grandifolia* Ehrh., 2%). The remaining 1% BA consisted of red spruce (*Picea*

rubens Sarg.), red maple (*Acer rubrum* L.), Eastern white-cedar (*Thuja occidentalis* L.), white birch (*Betula papyrifera* Marsh.) and balsam fir (*Abies balsamea* (L.) Mill.).

2.4.2 Tree selection

In 2007, 35 sugar maples in dominant and co-dominant crown positions were selected in 5 plots within the study site. The stems were chosen in order to create a gradient of distance to skid trail (primary and secondary), the farthest serving as controls (see Table 2.1 for characteristics of the selected trees). Trees were also selected across a range of diameter at breast height (DBH, 1.3 m above ground) and were checked for any defect that could indicate reduced vigour due to causes other than machinery traffic. Distances to skid trails and tree height were measured using a Vertex III Ultrasonic Hypsometer (Haglöf, Långsele, Sweden).

2.4.3 Soil disturbance

A circular influence zone (Fig. 2.1) was estimated around each tree selected for sap flow measurements following the methodology used by Hartmann *et al.* (2008): assuming that tree crown dimensions can be used as a proxy for root system coverage, and that crown dimensions can be predicted from tree bole diameter (Tubbs, 1977), the radius of this influence zone can be

calculated with the following equation scaled for sugar maple (Beaudet, Messier and Canham, 2002):

$$\text{Radius (m)} = 0.100 \times \text{DBH (cm)}$$

Using the distance from skid trail, we estimated the proportion of the influence zone disturbed by machinery traffic. This proportion was then expressed as a percentage of the influence zone disturbed by machinery ("MD"). Based on this percentage and the type of trail, trees were grouped in four classes: (1) control trees, not disturbed by machinery ("C", MD = 0% or very low), (2) trees in proximity to primary trails ("P", mean MD = 28.95%), (3) trees in proximity to secondary trails ("S", mean MD = 29.99%), (4) trees at the intersection of a primary and a secondary trail ("A", mean MD = 49.54%).

2.4.4 Sap flow measurements

Sap flow was estimated using the thermal dissipation method (Granier, 1985). This method consists of copper-constantan thermocouples mounted on thin needle-like probes. A pair of 33 mm-long probes (UP GmbH, Cottbus, Germany) was inserted in the stem of each tree at 1.30 m. Probes were placed 10 cm apart one above the other, on the north side of the tree, and shielded with aluminum foil. The upper sensor was heated with constant power; sap flow density was calculated from the temperature difference between the two probes (Granier, 1987). Sensors were connected to a 12V battery for heating and to a datalogger (Delta-T Devices Ltd, Cambridge, UK)

for measurement recording at 10 min intervals. Daily averages were used in the analyses. Sap flow was measured on the trees of one plot for about 10 days and the equipment moved to the next plot thereafter. Measurements were performed between June 25 and September 10 2007, before autumn leaf fall.

2.4.5 Meteorological measurements

Meteorological and soil water availability were measured to take into account the influence of environmental conditions on sap flow. Air temperature and relative humidity were measured at the center of the plot with an RHT2nl sensor (Delta-T Devices Ltd). These measurements were used to calculate the vapor pressure deficit (VPD) following Bolton (1980). The logarithm of the sap flow was found to be quadratic with regards to VPD. Moreover, mean VPD values were centered on zero to reduce the correlation between the two polynomial terms.

Soil matric water potential (MWP) was measured using an equitensiometer (EQ15, Ecomatik, Munich, Germany) positioned at a depth of 10 cm. All measurements were performed at 10 min intervals, averaged every 30 min and recorded with a datalogger (Delta-T Devices Ltd).

2.4.6 Statistical analysis

A segmented regression was used to test for a threshold in the effect of MD on sap flow density and to estimate the breakpoint value. The original dataset was then divided into two subsets according to this estimate; linear mixed-effects (LME) models were fitted separately for each subset. Mixed-effects models allowed the addition of a random-effect parameter at the tree level. By decomposing the variance, random effects account for the between-subject error (Pinheiro and Bates, 2000). To test for a difference between the primary and secondary trails, the MD continuous variable was then replaced in the models (if MD was statistically significant) by the categorical “treatment” variable (classes C, P, S and A, described above).

Although analysis of repeated measurements usually require the use of a correlation structure to account for the within-subject error, the plot of the autocorrelation function showed no within-group serial correlation. Moreover, the addition of a first-order autoregressive structure (AR(1)) did not improve the models (based on the results of likelihood ratio tests). As a result, independent errors models (without correlation structures) were used. Significance of different covariates (e.g. tree height, DBH, etc.) was evaluated. Significance level was $\alpha = 0.05$. All statistical analyses were performed with the R statistical software (R Development Core Team, 2009), using the segmented (Muggeo, 2010) and nlme (Pinheiro *et al.*, 2009) libraries.

2.5 Results

2.5.1 Meteorological conditions during the sampling period

Mean VPD was 0.50 kPa during the 2007 summer, with minimum and maximum values of 0.06 kPa and 1.08 kPa, respectively. Figure 2.2 illustrates the relationship between VPD, mean sap flow and precipitation events, and indicates that no drought period occurred during the sampling period, as sap flow closely follows VPD. Moreover, measurements of soil matrix water potential showed no period of reduced soil water availability (MWP = 0 kPa).

2.5.2 Effects of tree characteristics on sap flow density

Because of the strong correlation between DBH and height ($r = 0.52$, $z = 13.99$, $p < 0.001$), these variables could not be included in the models at the same time. DBH proved to be a better covariate than height, based on the adjusted R^2 from the segmented regression using DBH ($R^2 = 0.62$) or height ($R^2 = 0.57$).

2.5.3 Effects of skid trails on sap flow density

A threshold value in the influence of MD on sap flow was estimated at 18.17% ($\pm 4.38\%$) by the segmented regression (Fig. 2.3). The left slope was positive (0.016, $p=0.04$; Table 2.2) and the right slope negative (-0.019, as

estimated from the difference-in-slope parameter). DBH and the quadratic expression of VPD were significant covariates ($p < 0.001$ for all) and the model explained 61.7% of the variance. Linear mixed-effects models fitted on the two subsets (below and above the breakpoint) showed concurring results, although slightly different: MD and DBH were not significant covariates in the LME fitted on MD values below the breakpoint (Table 2.3). However, they were significant in the LME fitted on MD values above the threshold (Table 2.4). Both models proved to fit well, based on a graphical assessment (Fig. 2.4) and the prediction errors (Tables 2.3 and 2.4). These results indicate that while MD has no effect on sap flow below 18.17%, sap flow decreased linearly above that threshold. Based on the coefficient estimates, a 1% increase in MD induces a 1.8% decrease in sap flow. For a tree with 40.26% MD (mean observed value), this represents a 39.76% decrease compared to a tree at the threshold value (MD=18.17%).

2.5.4 Comparison of primary and secondary trails

No significant difference in sap flow density was found between trees in proximity to primary trails and secondary trails (Table 2.5). Although the coefficient estimate suggest that sap flow of trees close to secondary trails was 11.5% higher, the difference was not statistically significant ($p = 0.65$). Moreover, mean MD value for these trees was lower than for trees close to a primary trail (35.38% vs 40.37%, $W = 1338$, $p = 0.005$). If repeated passage of machinery (primary trails) had a greater impact on sap flow, it would be

exaggerated by the difference in mean MD. Therefore, the coefficient may be slightly overestimated.

2.6 Discussion

This study is the first, to our knowledge, to report evidence of water stress in mature residual trees after partial harvest. A significant negative relationship was found between sap flow density and the proportion of the root system under a skid trail, beyond a threshold of 18.17%. This result suggests that the inferred belowground disturbance led to water stress for trailside trees, even if no dry period was recorded during the experiment. Precision of the breakpoint estimate could however be questioned, since the confidence interval is large. Figure 2.3 shows that few values were observed between 10 and 20% MD: this might make the estimation of the breakpoint difficult if it falls in or close to this interval. However, Muggeo (2003) indicates that the algorithm used in the R function depends on the existence of a break-point that it is generally believed to exist when the algorithm converges. Furthermore, the confidence interval does not include the minimum or maximum value of the MD variable. The use of the threshold value to fit separate linear mixed-effects models is therefore justified.

An average sap flow decrease of 39.76% is predicted by the model for trees with MD values above the threshold. This reduction is similar to what has been observed during dry periods: Hölscher *et al.* (2005) studied sap flow in four diffuse-porous species and found that sap flow density was reduced by 31% to 44% during a dry period, compared to sap flow at equal vapour

pressure deficit in a wet period; Pataki, Oren and Smitih (2000) reported a 50% decrease in sap flow in late successional species *Abies lasiocarpa* (Hook.) Nutt. in response to soil moisture deficit; and Kume *et al.* (2007) found a reduction of 10 to 40% for evergreen trees in northern Thailand.

Contrary to what was expected, no significant difference in sap flow was found between trees in proximity to primary and secondary trails. Furthermore, a study conducted at the same site showed that root growth was equally reduced in both types of trails (Malo, 2009). These results are consistent with studies reporting that most of the damage occurs during the first machinery pass. Williamson and Neilson (2000) observed that 62% of the compaction in the top 10 cm of the soil was produced during the first machinery run. Brais and Camiré (1998) described the relationship between the number of skidding cycles and the intensity and extent of soil compaction; they found that half of the effects on mineral soil bulk density and soil strength occurred in the first two skidding cycles.

Water deficit reduces both height and radial growth of trees. In temperate forests, inter-annual variations in water availability account for up to 80% of the variability in size increment (Bréda *et al.*, 2006). Similarly, water stress induced by soil compaction has been shown to reduce tree growth: Gomez *et al.* (2002) reported a significant correlation between leaf carbon isotopic composition signature (an indicator of water status) and tree growth in compacted soils. Moreover, Smith *et al.* (2010) studied the effects of soil disturbance on basal area growth rates of sugar maples after selection harvest and found that as the percentage of root area affected increased,

growth rates were reduced. Therefore, future growth of the water stressed sugar maples in our study may also be reduced. Since skid trails (primary and secondary) can remove up to 20% of the initial basal area, a considerable portion of the residual stand may be affected.

However, some studies report contrasting results. For example, Hartmann *et al.* (2008) studied stable carbon isotope composition and stem radial growth rates of sugar maple 11 years after selection harvest and found no sign of post-harvest water stress or decreased growth in trees subjected to soil disturbance. This discrepancy illustrates that tree growth response to soil compaction may vary widely depending on soil and site properties, therefore making global predictions difficult. Response could also be different between tree species. For example, Tubbs (1977) found that while sugar maple roots were rather evenly distributed, yellow birch roots were frequently located all on the same side of the tree. This could lead to machinery damage in a high proportion of the root system if a skid trail was to be created close to the tree on the side of the roots, and thus make the tree highly susceptible to water stress.

Since both soil compaction and root damage were not measured in this study, it is difficult to identify which of these types of belowground disturbance is responsible for the observed water stress. More research is needed to identify the specific cause of water stress.

2.7 Conclusion

Sap flow density of trees in proximity to skid trails was reduced as a result of heavy machinery-induced root damage and soil compaction. The magnitude of this reduction was comparable to the sap flow decrease that occurs during drought periods. Moreover, no significant difference was found between primary and secondary skid trails suggesting that most of the damage was created during the first machinery pass. Sap flow declined significantly when a minimum of 18.17% of the influence zone around the trees was disturbed, indicating the existence of a belowground disturbance threshold. While residual trees can withstand low levels of soil compaction and root breakage, more severe damage may lead to decreased transpiration and photosynthesis. Subsequent growth reduction could compromise expected yields and impair the fulfillment of management objectives, although uncertainties remain concerning trees response on the long term and at the scale of the stand.

2.8 Literature cited

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2.9 Figures

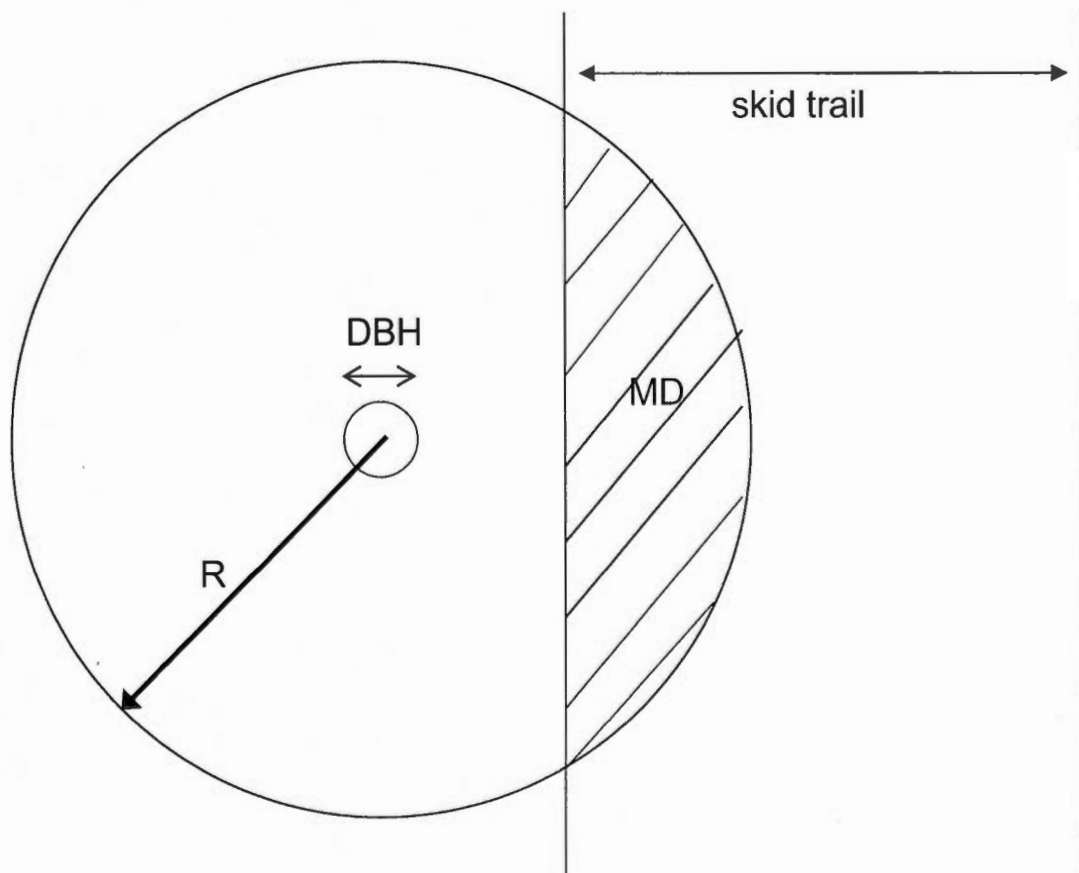


Figure 2.1 Scheme of the influence zone around each sampled tree, with radius R (m) = $0.100(DBH)$ (cm). The hachured area represents the proportion of the influence zone disturbed by the passage of the machinery (MD).

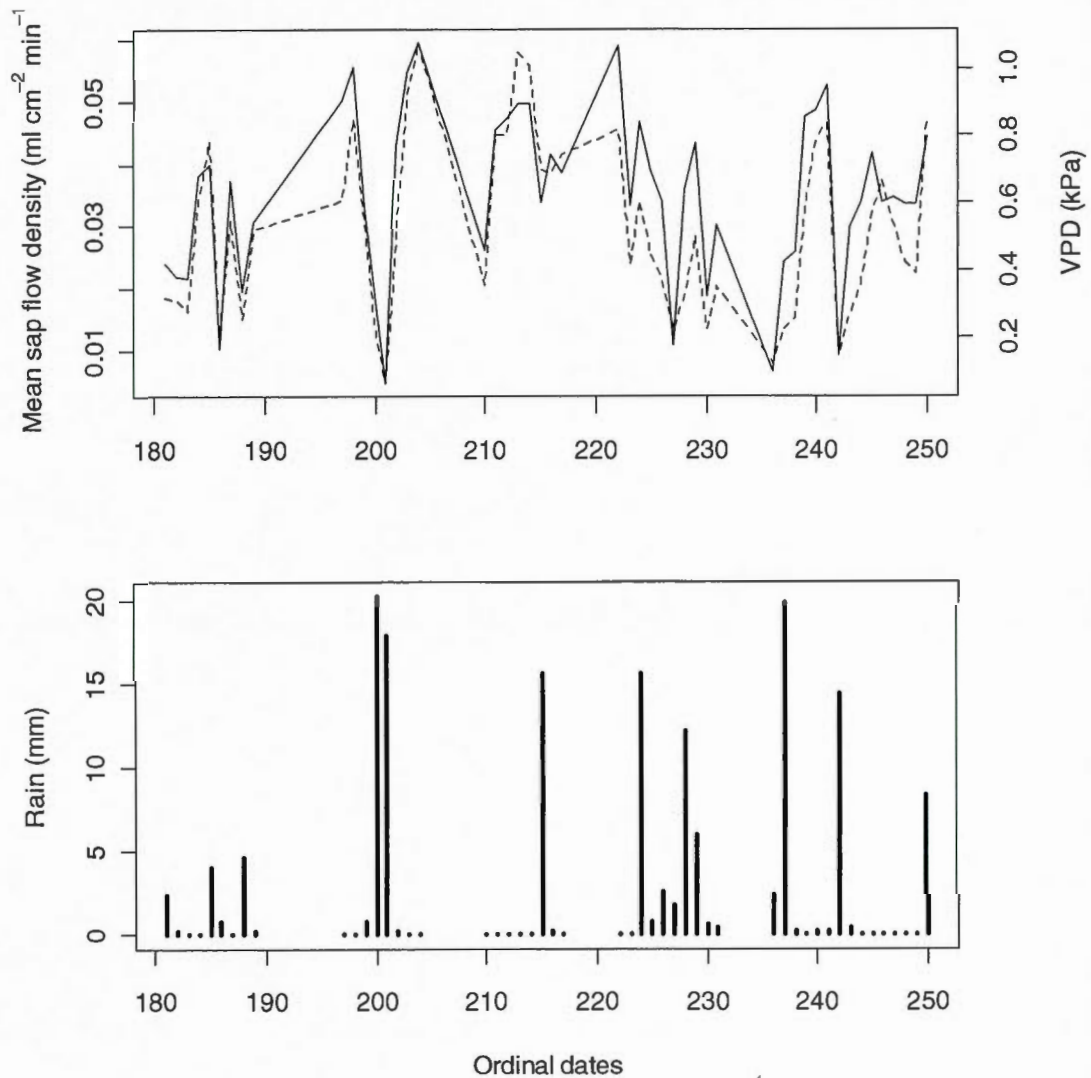


Figure 2.2 Mean sap flow density (solid line) and mean vapor pressure deficit (dashed line) (a) and precipitation events (b) during the sampling period. Sap flow was averaged for all trees and rain was recorded at a nearby weather station (Environment Canada, 2008).

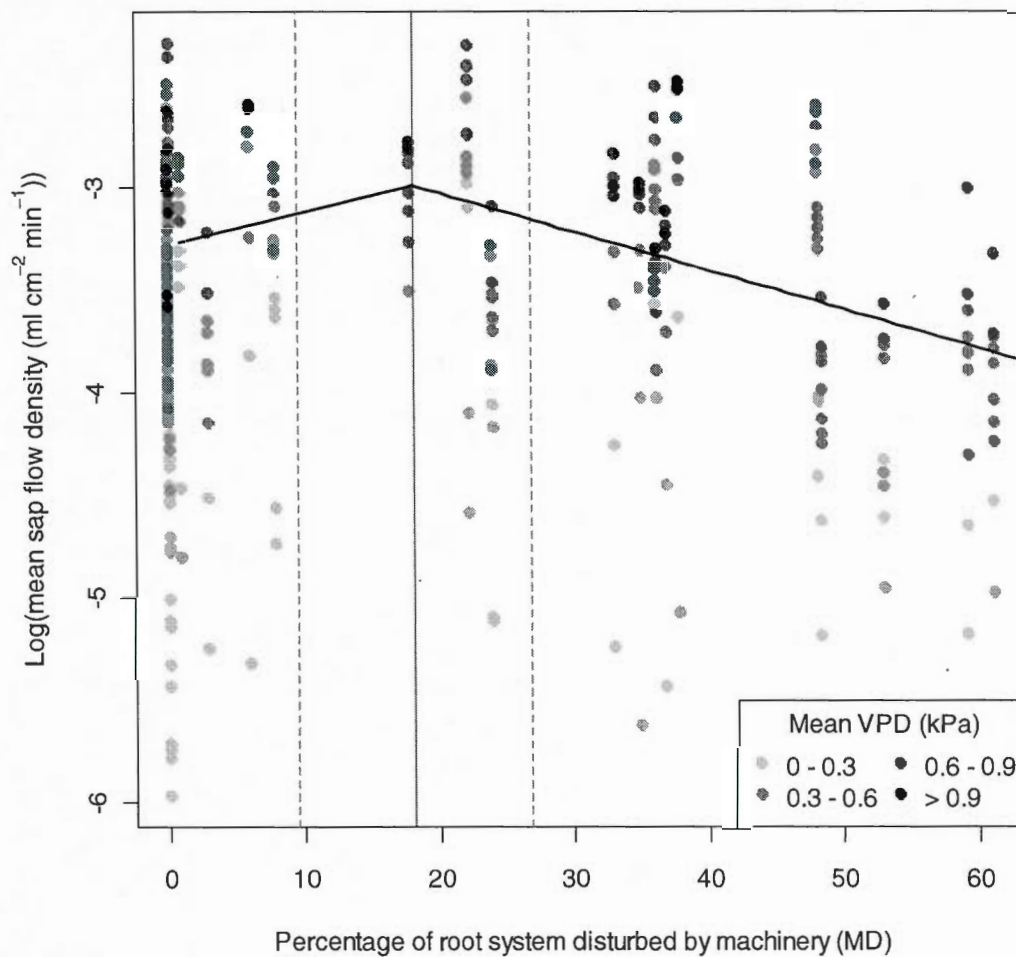


Figure 2.3 Mean sap flow density ($\text{ml cm}^{-2} \text{min}^{-1}$) as a function of the percentage of the root system disturbed by machinery (MD). The black solid line represents the segmented regression for a tree of mean DBH (26.3 cm) at a mean value of VPD (0.5 kPa). The gray vertical solid line represents the breakpoint estimate and the two dashed lines its 95% confidence interval.

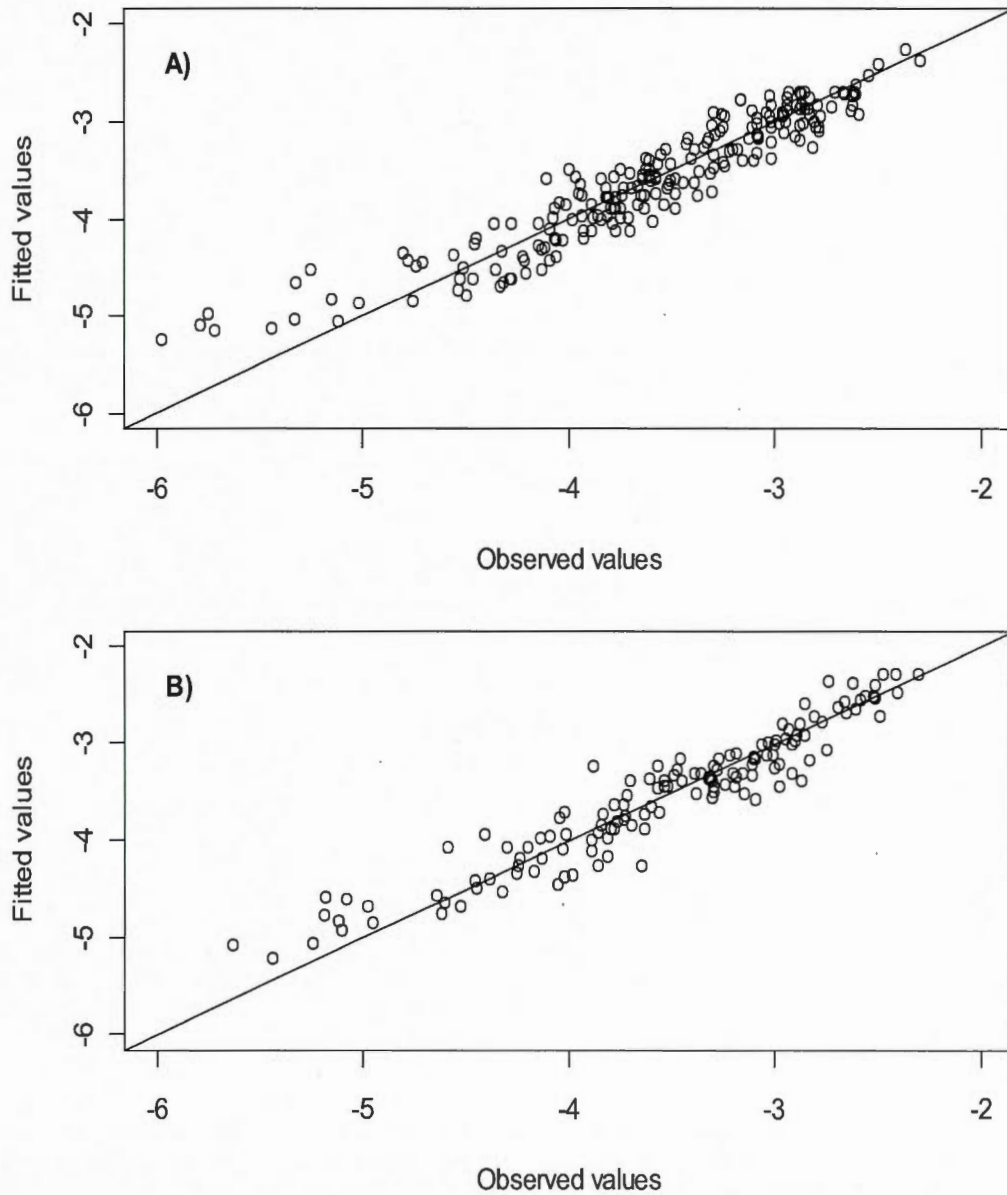


Figure 2.4 Goodness-of-fit graphical representation for LME models fitted on A) MD values smaller than the breakpoint (18.17%) and B) MD values larger than the breakpoint.

2.10 Tables

Table 2.1 Characteristics of sampled trees for each treatment class. Values in parentheses are means.

Treatment classes	Sample size	MD* (%)	DBH (cm)	Height (m)
Primary trail (P)	n = 5	7.84 - 48.16 (28.95)	17.3 - 41.6 (27.4)	17.3 - 24.9 (20.0)
Secondary trail (S)	n = 9	2.83 - 61.04 (29.99)	21.9 - 43.8 (30.2)	17.7 - 23.6 (20.1)
Intersection of P and S (A)	n = 4	37.71 - 59.13 (49.54)	21.7 - 47.5 (34.2)	19.4 - 23.8 (20.9)
Control (C)	n = 17	0.00 - 0.82** (0.05)	14.5 - 35.7 (22.2)	15.1 - 23.9 (18.6)
TOTAL	n = 35	0.00 - 61.04 (17.53)	14.5 - 47.5 (26.3)	15.1 - 24.9 (19.5)

* MD is the proportion of the influence zone disturbed by machinery.

** One tree with less than 1% of MD was included in the control class.

Table 2.2 Coefficient estimates from the segmented regression. The parameter U1.MD represents the difference-in-slope at the breakpoint (MD = 18.17 ± 4.38).

Model formula : $\log(\text{sap flow}) \sim \text{VPD} + \text{mean VPD}^2 + \text{MD} + \text{DBH}$				
	Estimate	SE	t-value	p-value
(Intercept)	-3.889	0.086	-45.18	<0.001
VPD	2.149	0.102	21.10	<0.001
VPD ²	-3.942	0.355	-11.10	<0.001
MD	0.016	0.008	2.04	0.0422
DBH	0.023	0.004	6.30	<0.001
U1.MD	-0.035	0.008	-4.14	NA

Multiple $R^2 = 0.624$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.617$. Residual SE = 0.44 on 341 df.

Table 2.3 Coefficients, prediction errors and fit statistics for the linear mixed-effects model fitted for MD values smaller than the breakpoint (MD < 18.17%).

Fixed effects : $\log(\text{sap flow}) \sim \text{VPD} + \text{VPD}^2 + \text{MD} + \text{DBH}$					
	Value	SE	DF	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
(Intercept)	-3.440	0.42	187	-8.16	<0.0001
VPD	2.185	0.08	187	27.85	<0.0001
VPD ²	-3.472	0.28	187	-12.54	<0.0001
MD	0.016	0.02	18	0.72	0.4824
DBH	0.002	0.02	18	0.08	0.9338
Prediction errors					
	Mean error	Absolute mean error	Mean square error		
With random effects	-1.29e ⁻¹⁶	0.186	0.06		
Without random effects	-0.009	0.378	0.22		
SD of random effects					
Tree	0.423				
Residual	0.250				
Fit statistics					
No. of trees	21				
No. of observations	210				
Pseudo-<i>R</i>²					
With random effects	0.89				
Without random effects	0.55				

Table 2.4 Coefficients, prediction errors and fit statistics for the linear mixed-effects model fitted for MD values larger than the breakpoint (MD > 18.17%).

Fixed effects : $\log(\text{sap flow}) \sim \text{VPD} + \text{VPD}^2 + \text{MD} + \text{DBH}$					
	Value	SE	DF	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
(Intercept)	-3.510	0.42	122	-8.40	<0.0001
VPD	2.359	0.09	122	26.42	<0.0001
VPD ²	-3.618	0.31	122	-11.56	<0.0001
MD	-0.018	0.008	11	-2.41	0.0346
DBH	0.029	0.01	11	3.01	0.0119
Prediction errors					
	Mean error	Absolute mean error		Mean square error	
With random effects	$8.37e^{-17}$	0.168		0.05	
Without random effects	0.011	0.292		0.13	
SD of random effects					
Tree	0.312				
Residual	0.236				
Fit statistics					
No. of trees	14				
No. of observations	138				
Pseudo-R^2					
With random effects	0.91				
Without random effects	0.75				

Table 2.5 Comparison of primary and secondary skid trails: coefficients, prediction errors and fit statistics. The LME model was fitted on MD values larger than the breakpoint (MD > 18.17%), using the categorical "Treatment" variable.

Fixed effects : $\log(\text{sap flow}) \sim \text{VPD} + \text{VPD}^2 + \text{Treatment} + \text{DBH}$					
	Value	SE	DF	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
(Intercept)	-4.212	0.37	122	-11.26	<0.0001
VPD	2.363	0.09	122	26.46	<0.0001
VPD ²	-3.584	0.31	122	-11.46	<0.0001
S vs P	0.115	0.24	10	0.47	0.65
A vs P	-0.335	0.27	10	-1.23	0.25
DBH	0.029	0.01	10	3.01	0.02
Prediction errors					
	Mean error	Absolute mean error		Mean square error	
With random effects	2.28e ⁻¹⁶	0.168		0.05	
Without random effects	0.019	0.293		0.14	
SD of random effects					
Tree	0.342				
Residual	0.236				
Fit statistics					
No. of trees	14				
No. of observations	138				
Pseudo-R²					
With random effects	0.91				
Without random effects	0.73				

CONCLUSION GÉNÉRALE

Dans les systèmes de coupes partielles, tel que le jardinage, les entrées répétées de la machinerie lourde dans les peuplements sont une source d'inquiétude. En effet, l'abatage et le débardage des arbres lors de la récolte occasionne inévitablement des blessures aux arbres résiduels situés en bordure des sentiers. Les objectifs de cette étude étaient donc d'évaluer l'importance des blessures d'exploitation et d'identifier les principales causes de mortalité après coupe de jardinage, ainsi que de déterminer si certains facteurs, tels que l'espèce ou la taille de l'arbre, peuvent prédisposer à la mortalité.

Les résultats présentés au chapitre 1 démontrent que les blessures d'exploitation sont directement responsables de la mort de 21 % des arbres (classes de décomposition 1 et 2), alors que les causes inconnues étaient responsables de 26 % de la mortalité. Ces deux catégories étaient associées aux arbres en bordure de sentier. Le stress hydrique détecté chez l'érable à sucre (chapitre 2) pourrait expliquer une partie des causes inconnues, advenant qu'il persiste durant plusieurs années. En effet, une relation négative a été trouvée entre le pourcentage de la zone d'influence (une approximation de la couverture du système racinaire) perturbé par la machinerie et le flux de sève, au-dessus d'une valeur seuil d'environ 18 %. Pour la moyenne des arbres, la diminution de flux de sève due au passage de la machinerie était comparable à ce qui a été trouvé lors de périodes de sécheresse, ce qui pourrait éventuellement réduire la croissance des arbres et causer la mort. Si ces suppositions sont vraies, les perturbations liées à la

récolte pourrait donc être responsables de près de 47 % de la mortalité après coupe de jardinage. Une meilleure estimation de ce pourcentage nécessiterait toutefois de retrancher la mortalité naturelle, qui serait survenue même en l'absence de coupe dans ces peuplements.

La taille des arbres et leur espèce ont été cernées comme facteurs prédisposants : la mortalité était supérieure dans les classes de diamètre inférieures et chez le bouleau jaune, qui a aussi été trouvé plus sensible aux blessures d'exploitation. Cette disproportion entre les classes de taille et les espèces pourraient avoir des effets négatifs à long terme sur la structure et la composition du peuplement. Il serait alors prudent de tenir compte de ces facteurs lors de la planification des sentiers de débardage. Par exemple, les bouleaux jaunes devraient être évités autant que possible.

La mortalité n'a cependant pas pu être quantifiée (taux par année) dans notre étude. Il est donc difficile de discuter de l'ampleur de la mortalité dans les peuplements à l'étude. De plus, le stress hydrique a été détecté seulement 1 an après la coupe. Il serait nécessaire d'étudier ce phénomène à plus long terme afin de vérifier s'il joue réellement un rôle dans la mortalité des arbres en bordure de sentier. Cependant, nos résultats démontrent tout de même que les perturbations liées aux opérations forestières ont des effets non négligeables sur la mortalité après la coupe.

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