



FORESTRY COMMITTEE YEAR END REPORT

Issue of concern to the Forestry Committee in 2015 continues to focus on topics that have been identified in previous reports. Two in particular are addressed here.

Content and approval of Forest Stewardship Plans

The FSP is the only operational plan that must be made available for public review and comment, and is the only operational plan that requires government approval. In 2006, the Forest Practices Board (FPB) examined the content of the initial FSP's and concluded that they were not well-suited for public review, content was sparse, and enforceability of results and strategies was limited due to the way they were written. The FPB conducted a follow up investigation in 2014 to determine if FSP's have improved since 2006. The Board found that most plans they reviewed contain results or strategies that do not demonstrate consistency with governments FRPA objectives, and that all have significant problems with measurability or verifiability. Many FSP's cover vast and overlapping areas of the province making it very difficult for public understanding and review, and generally are written in a manner that renders them of little value to the public.

The FLNRO Ministry responded that “achieving a new standard” for FSP's will take time and collaboration. Provincial FSP training sessions for plan preparers, reviewers and approvers are scheduled for Spring 2016. The poor results reported by the FPB investigation also bring into questions the effectiveness of **professional reliance**. A spokesperson with the Association of BC Forest Professionals will speak on professional reliance at our April AGM Convention.

Need for development of a management planning framework that integrates landscape level biodiversity and wildlife requirements with forest development

There are a number of government initiatives that appear to have relevance to this topic. The MFLNRO is developing a new management unit planning framework, the Integrated Resource Management Plan (IRMP). The IRMP is a sustainable forest management planning framework with the objective to integrate all aspects of landscape-level and operational planning for each Timber Supply Area (TSA). It is expected that the IRMP process will improve the linkages to landscape level fire management, the Cumulative Effects Framework, the Forest and Range Evaluation Program's (FREP) multiple resource values assessments (MRVA) and other regional, management unit level or landscape level plans and strategies. The IRMP aims to improve resource planning by addressing issues such as: current and predicted harvest levels – are the assumptions regarding the transition from old growth stands to second growth and managed stands accurate and, if not, what are the possible impacts on timber harvest and habitat values; what options are available to address habitat and timber supply using silvicultural treatments; risks to wildlife, biodiversity, and other resource uses must be identified and understood to mitigate adverse, unintentional impacts; climate change adaptation strategies, etc.

The Cumulative Effects Framework is an initiative that includes policies, procedures and decision-support tools designed to improve the assessment and management of cumulative effects in natural resource decision making in B.C.

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/natural-resource-stewardship/cumulative-effects-framework>



2015 YEAR END REPORT

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Given the increased amount of diversity of resource development activity in recent years, government has recognized and is acting on the need to look at resource development projects on a regional basis, as opposed to a sector-by-sector or project-by-project basis. The cumulative effects framework is being actively applied in the Northeast, Thompson-Okanagan and Cariboo regions, as well as expanding throughout the North and into specific areas like the Elk Valley and Howe Sound. By April 2016, a policy and procedures manual will be completed, as well as recommendations for any potential legislative changes.

Other than industry stakeholders and First Nations, the degree of public engagement on these initiatives is unclear. And while species at risk and biodiversity values are identified, the opportunity to incorporate wildlife population objectives and targets is not explicitly recognized. Time will tell.

Respectfully Submitted By:

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Forestry Committee Chair