



**Species of Management Concern
and At Risk Ecological Community
Standard Operating Procedure**
Okanagan-Columbia Business Area
2025-05-21

INTRODUCTION

BCTS is committed to manage Species at Risk identified through federal and provincial legislation, as well as to meet Sustainable Forest Management certification requirements. Additionally, some species and species habitat features (e.g., wetlands that provide breeding habitat for amphibians) may not have legal requirements but are still recognized by BCTS as needing additional management guidance. Together these species and their habitat features are referred to as Species of Management Concern (SOMC). BCTS has similar legal and certification obligations related to the management of At Risk Ecological Communities (AREC), which are included in this document.

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is intended to provide guidance to all BCTS staff and contractors related to BCTS SOMC and AREC programs. The corporate framework on the development of SOMC and AREC programs is outlined in the provincial [BCTS Species and Ecosystems of Management Concern Guide](#)

(https://intranet.gov.bc.ca/assets/intranet/flnrord/bcts/tos/sustainability/somc/somc_program_guide.pdf).

SCOPE

This SOP covers all aspects of forestry planning, block and road development. It includes and applies to relevant Okanagan-Columbia Business Area staff, licensees, and contractors working for BCTS. This SOP applies to the Okanagan-Columbia SOMC and AREC Focus Lists that were developed through the corporate program using the methodology outlined in the provincial BCTS SOMC Guide. The Focus Lists were reviewed and updated during this document draft.

The methods for determining how to determine if an SOMC or AREC have potential to occur in a harvest area was developed by BCTS staff and a qualified Registered Professional Biologist using the BC Conservation Data Centre's (CDC) Species and Ecosystems Explorer and iMapBC online tools, available at:

BC CDC Species and Ecosystems Explorer: <https://a100.gov.bc.ca/pub/eswp/>

BC CDC iMapBC online spatial data viewer: <https://maps.gov.bc.ca/ess/hm/imap4m/>

Primary resources needed to complete the fieldwork associated with identifying a potential AREC in the field include Land Management Handbook 76 (LMH 76; previously LMH 23), the BCTS At Risk Ecological Communities (AREC) Field Assessment Procedures – Natural Disturbance Type 1 (NDT1) document, and the appropriate BCTS Business Area AREC Focus Lists.



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OBJECTIVES OF THE SOP

1. Meet legal and Sustainable Forestry Management certification obligations.
2. Define the steps and procedures that are required to effectively determine the known or potential occurrence of and manage for, SOMC and AREC in the Okanagan-Columbia Business Area.
3. Identify which individuals or roles have the responsibility to complete the procedures outlined in this SOP.
4. Educate BCTS staff, Licensees, Permittees, and Contractors in the potential occurrence, identification, and management of SOMC and AREC.



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STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

1. SOMC and AREC Program Maintenance

Procedure	Responsibility
The Okanagan-Columbia SOMC and AREC programs have been developed through a BA specific process. Annually engage the services of a qualified registered professional to review and update SOMC and AREC program materials (Focus List, field cards, awareness sheets) to reflect changes in regulations or conservation status, occurrence information, certification requirements, or management direction that must be considered. Complete updates as necessary before training and distribution of SOMC and AREC materials.	Planning Officer, RPF, R.P.Bio.

2. TRAINING and AWARENESS

Procedure	Responsibility
Conduct SOMC and AREC awareness training session for BCTS staff and multi-phase contractors. Training is to be completed at a recommended frequency of once at least every 2 years; attendance must be recorded. At a minimum training content should include background on legal and certification requirements related to SOMC and AREC as well as a review of the local Focus Lists and available resources.	Planning Officer, Planning Forester, Contractors as applicable
Provide all BCTS field staff and multi-phase contractors with training materials, applicable SOPs / Best Management Practices and reference materials to be used for species and AREC identification and management in the field.	Ops Tech, Planning Forester
TSL holder awareness training will occur at pre-work meetings as described in Section 4.	Ops Tech, Planning Forester

3. PLANNING

Procedure	Responsibility
Prior to starting any block or road layout works, identify any known occurrences of AREC, SOMC and their habitat, or potential SOMC habitat features as part of the Planning-to-Operations Handover (release) process. If occurrences are identified or if there is a high likelihood of occurrence, discuss the management implications with the contractor.	Planning Forester, Practices Forester, R.P.Bio.



It is worth noting that for potential ARECs that they are plant associations, not site series. Plant associations might occur in multiple site series, so it's the combination of the plants listed in the AREC that make it sensitive, not the site series its listed in.

Review the BC CDC iMapBC interactive database to identify any known occurrences of SOMC or AREC. This database allows for the selection of provincial layers for known occurrences of SOMC or ARECs. Note that known occurrences of SOMC or AREC will only exist if another contractor has reported them to the BC CDC; no known observations does not mean they do not exist.

1. Go to the CDC [iMapBC online data warehouse](#) using the hyperlink.
2. Go to the "Navigation" tab, and select "Upload Data"
3. Upload the .kml or .shp file of the boundary of the block or layout for the proposed project work.
4. Go back to the "Data Sources" tab and select "Add DataBC Layers". Add the following layers:
 - Species and ecosystems at risk – publicly available occurrences
 - Species and ecosystems at risk – (masked secured) publicly available occurrences
5. Select the polygon of the boundary of the block or layout by hovering over the polygon and clicking once. This should illuminate the polygon blue, and a window identifying the polygon will pop up. Select "Add to Results".
6. The "Results" window will open. Click on the three dots icon and select "Show Buffer Options". In the buffer options window, set the buffer to 0 and continue. This will populate a list of all the layers in the "Identify Results" window that overlap with the polygon.
7. In the "Identify Results" window, select the icon with four horizontal lines next to the "x" icon. Select "Export to XLSX" and download the file. This will create an excel file with tabs of each of the layers applied to the search. This excel file is to be reviewed for known occurrences of SOMC or AREC within the proposed work area during the planning procedure.
8. Cross reference with the Okanagan-Columbia Focus List and export those SOMC and AREC that occur on both lists.

Review the Okanagan-Columbia SOMC / AREC Focus List. Identify the BEC subzone variant that the block occurs in and use the "Sort & Filter" function by selecting all rows marked with an "x", indicating that SOMC or AREC has



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potential to occur in the block. Copy the list of Common/Scientific names and include in pre-work planning as the Focus List for the block.

4. PRE-WORKS

Procedure	Responsibility
For TSLs --Review the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SOMC operator awareness sheet Wildlife habitat features in the vicinity of the planned activities BCTS' plan to manage any known habitat features or AREC including timing restrictions or any other requirements for the TSL, as well as any relevant results and strategies in the FSP Reporting procedure if a species occurrence or an AREC is identified (i.e., reference EMS EFPs) 	TSL Coordinator, Ops Tech
For planning and development contracts (e.g., cutblock and road layout, multi-phase, road construction, etc.) -- Review the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Site/project-specific SOMC and AREC Focus Lists updated using results of the BC CDC known and potential occurrence review Wildlife habitat features in the vicinity of the planned activities Management strategies to be considered (from legal orders, FSP, BA SOP's, etc.) Reporting procedure if a SOMC species occurrence, important habitat feature, or an AREC is identified 	Practices Forester, Planning Forester, Ops Tech

5. FIELD ASSESSMENT

Procedure	Responsibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide all BCTS field staff and contractors with the SOMC Field Cards and the AREC Assessment Procedures to be used for species and AREC identification in the field. For reference material, this should include the list of Site/project-specific SOMC and AREC Focus Lists updated using results of the BC CDC known occurrence review and Focus List data filtering to BEC subzone for potential to occur. 	Practices Forester



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<p>If a SOMC, SOMC habitat feature, or an AREC is identified in the field:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage a qualified registered professional if required to confirm identification of an AREC, a species or the status of a habitat feature including the ecological condition (e.g., level and type of disturbance present) of the habitat it occurs in. Follow the Field Action protocol on the Field Card or the applicable AREC Field Assessment Procedure for the Natural Disturbance Type of the area, Record relevant information, take photos and document the location, Notify the Practices Forester contract coordinator. <p><i>See Section 7. REPORTING for additional requirements.</i></p>	BCTS Staff and Contractors
<p>Once a SOMC, SOMC habitat feature, or an AREC is identified, develop a specific management protocol using any additional supplemental species information, such as local BMPs or SOPs and/or by consulting a qualified registered professional.</p>	BCTS Staff and Contractors, or R.P.Bio.
<p>Depending on the SOMC or AREC in question and site specifics, management options will vary and may include:</p> <p>Avoidance/Protection: Exclude the SOMC habitat feature or AREC from the Exhibit A area or protect it through establishment of some form of reserve within the TSL. The reserve area should be sufficient to protect the SOMC or AREC from potential edge effects of harvesting.</p> <p>Note: If it is incorporated into a WTRA ensure the associated RESULTS submission includes the appropriate silviculture reserve objective code. It is recommended the reserve be excluded from the Exhibit A area to ensure licensees cannot relocate the reserve.</p> <p>Modified practice: results or strategies from an approved FSP, professional recommendations or other mitigating practices from a BMP may be appropriate to describe in the TSL Highlights, Site Plan and/or TSL document. Please contact BCTS Provincial Operations staff if advice is required on how best to approach the situation.</p>	BCTS Staff and Contractors, or R.P.Bio.
<p>Identify the location of known occurrences of SOMC habitat features or AREC on the Site Plan, Road Construction and Harvest Plan maps and include appropriate no-disturbance buffers if they apply. Identify any areas of concern or timing restrictions relating to the management of the identified features, including any species or site specific management requirements such as timing windows or otherwise, if applicable.</p>	BCTS Staff and Contractors



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Submit the spatial location of the identified SOMC, SOMC habitat feature or AREC to BCTS including any proposed or required no-disturbance buffer as per the “ <i>Digital Submission Standards – User Guide</i> ”, including all the necessary data required to report the occurrence to the BC Conservation Data Centre.	BCTS Staff and Contractors
When the Final Development Package submission is received, update the local BCTS spatial layer to include any SOMC habitat features or AREC identified as part of the development. Include any proposed or required no-disturbance buffers in the spatial data package as prescribed by BCTS staff, contractors, or R.P.Bio. retained on the project	BCTS GIS

6. FOREST OPERATIONS

Procedure	Responsibility
Insert any relevant clauses or wording related to timing restrictions or other management requirement, such as proposed no-disturbance buffers, associated with the SOMC habitat feature or AREC into the TSL Highlights or other contractual documents. Wording of any such clauses should be reviewed by BCTS Provincial Operations to ensure enforceability.	Eng Tech, Ops Tech
As part of the Harvest and Roads pre-work process, notify contractors (road construction) and TSL holders (road construction and harvesting) of the location of any known SOMC, SOMC habitat features or AREC, and any special management requirements, such as proposed no-disturbance buffers, associated with the features identified within a development area.	Eng Tech, Ops Tech
Monitor forest operations to ensure that all applicable SOMC or AREC management strategies, such as proposed no-disturbance buffers, are properly implemented by contractors and TSL holders operating within the BA. Follow the inspection and monitoring requirements established under the BA’s Environmental Management System (EMS).	Eng Tech, Ops Tech
If a previously unidentified SOMC, SOMC habitat feature or AREC is discovered during the forest operations, notify BCTS immediately, ideally before the SOMC or AREC is disturbed. <i>See Section 7. REPORTING for additional requirements.</i>	Licensee, Contractor
For forest operations under BCTS Contract --If a previously unidentified SOMC, SOMC habitat feature or AREC is discovered, develop and implement a specific management protocol for the species, habitat feature, or AREC using the species supplemental information, the draft BCTS AREC Management Guidance or by consulting a qualified registered professional, such as an R.P.Bio. familiar	BCTS Staff/Multi-phase Contractor, RPF, R.P.Bio, Works Contractor



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with forest operations and SOMC/ARECs. Modify the 'works' contract if/as required to implement the associated protocol.	
For forest operations under TSLs --If a previously unidentified SOMC, SOMC habitat feature or AREC is discovered by the licensee, support as required to create and implement a management protocol for the species or feature. Methods to support could include sharing any relevant BCTS protocols / procedures or providing professional advice to develop a management plan.	BCTS Staff, Licensee
If a previously unidentified SOMC, SOMC habitat feature or AREC is discovered during harvesting or road construction and the applicable First Nation has requested to be notified, the Practices Forester will notify the Indigenous Relations Liaison, who in turn will notify the First Nation as soon as possible after discovery.	Practices Forester, IRL
During and at the completion of harvesting or road construction, as part of the periodic inspections and monitoring required under the BCTS EMS, assess adherence to any SOMC or AREC requirements such as timing windows or protection of habitat features. If any requirements were not met, conduct an EMS Incident Investigation ensuring details are documented on the Incident Report Form (CHK-009) and entered into the LRM EMS Certification Module. Notify Practices Forester and CSO. If you suspect a potential non-compliance with a legal requirement, C&E must be notified.	BCTS Staff, Practices Forester

7. REPORTING

Procedure	Responsibility
Submit occurrences of SOMC, SOMC habitat features and AREC to the BC Conservation Data Centre, using the Incidental Observations submission process (https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/wildlife/wildlife-data-information/submit-wildlife-data-information). Note: Species to be reported to the BC CDC include all Red or Blue-listed species and their nests or dens, species included on Schedule 1 of the <i>Species at Risk Act</i> and their nests or dens. All AREC on BCTS Focus Lists must be reported.	Multi-phase Contractor, Contract Coordinator
Complete any additional reporting requirements outlined in specific Land Use Orders within the Business Area.	Contract Coordinator

8. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Procedure	Responsibility
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BCTS
BC Timber Sales

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On an annual basis, review the business processes relating to the BA's SOMC and AREC management and update the processes, as required.

On an annual basis, review the SOMC and AREC Focus Lists and update, as required.

BCTS SOMC Intranet Site [Species of management concern - Ministry of Forests \(gov.bc.ca\)](#)

BCTS AREC Intranet Site [At risk ecological communities - Ministry of Forests \(gov.bc.ca\)](#)

**Planning Forester,
Planning Officer**

Additional SOMC and AREC Resources

BC Conservation Data Centre:

- iMap tool [Conservation Data Centre \(gov.bc.ca\)](#)
- Species and Ecosystem Explorer [Search Criteria \(gov.bc.ca\)](#)
- Submit Wildlife and Plant Data – Incidental Observations [Submit Wildlife / Plant Data and Information - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](#)
- Government Plants, Animals and Ecosystems Website [Plants, Animals & Ecosystems - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](#)