

# *Forest and Range Practices Act* **Improvement Initiative:** Renewal and Resilience

## **Discussion Paper**



Ministry of  
Forests, Lands, Natural  
Resource Operations  
and Rural Development



May 2019

I recently introduced amendments to the *Forest and Range Practices Act* (FRPA) to support the health and sustainability of B.C.'s public forests and rangelands, while strengthening public confidence in how these vital resources are managed.

FRPA governs the sustainable management of B.C.'s forest and range resources.

It covers planning and practices that protect environmental resources and public safety, as well as public oversight and administrative fairness for those who hold rights to forest and range resources. Together, the Act and its regulations are the foundation for competitive forest and ranching industries, partnerships with Indigenous Nations and stability for forestry- and ranching-dependent communities.

Making changes to the Act is essential to strengthen government's oversight of the forest sector and to restore public trust in how our forests and range lands are managed. We also need to make sure FRPA is positioned to help the Province adapt natural resource management to the effects of climate change. This work supports modernization of land use planning, renewal of forest policy province-wide and improvement of wildlife management and habitat conservation. It also advances reconciliation with B.C.'s Indigenous nations communities.

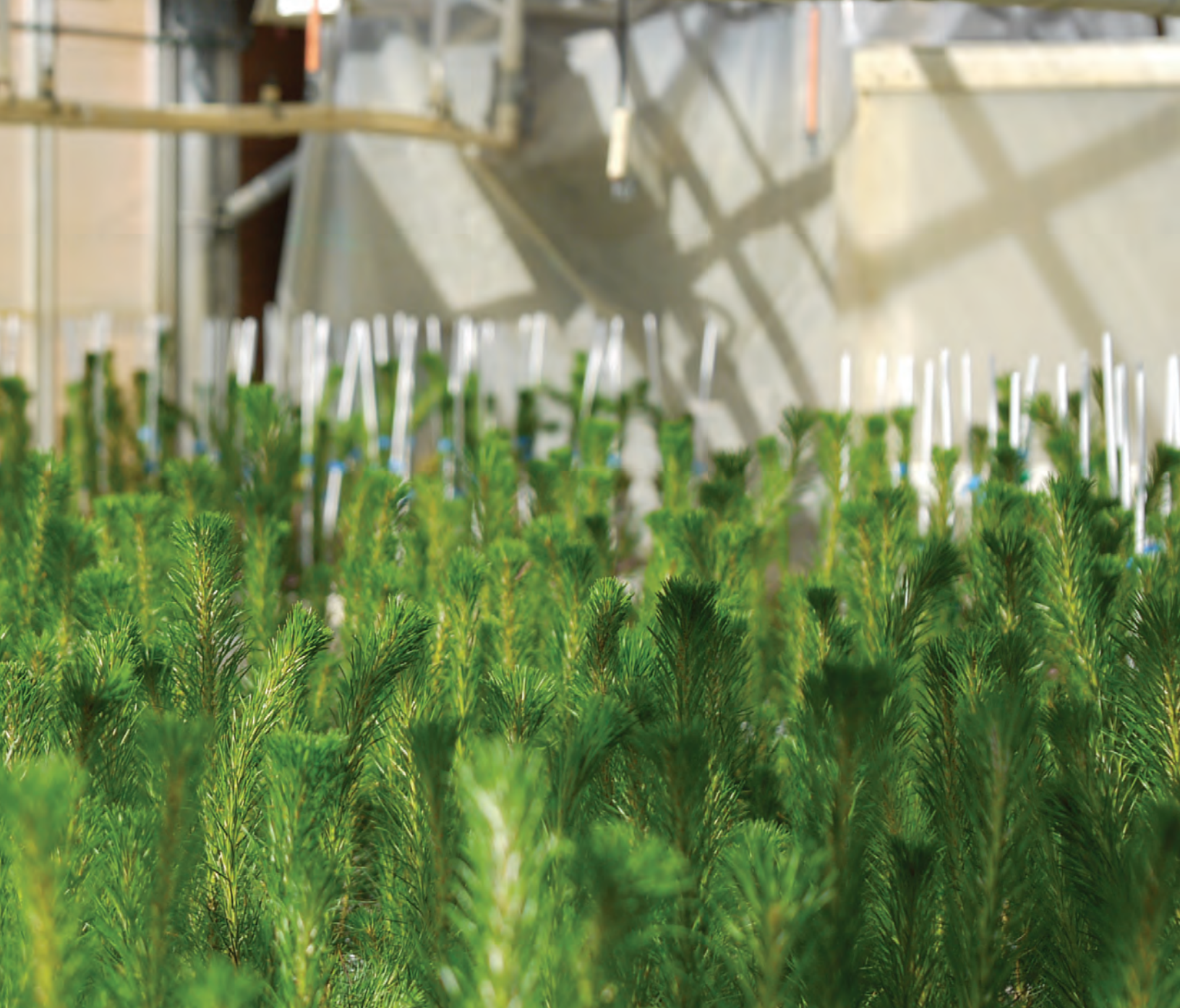
FRPA affects the interests and well-being of virtually all British Columbians. That's why the purpose of this paper is to invite Indigenous Nations, communities, industry stakeholders and the public to offer their perspectives on the sustainable management of B.C.'s forest and range resources. I invite you to review this paper and to share your comments and suggestions. I hope that, with your knowledge, we can create a renewed strategy for forest and range management that will benefit all British Columbians.



**The Honourable Doug Donaldson**

Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource  
Operations and Rural Development





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# MANAGING OUR FORESTS AND RANGELAND

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

British Columbia's forests and rangelands are often the foundation for community well-being throughout the province, providing both direct and indirect economic benefits for all British Columbians such as jobs, community stability and growth.

The *Forest and Range Practices Act* (FRPA) governs on-the-ground forest and range activities on B.C.'s public forests and rangelands. We're improving FRPA to ensure it will continue to effectively manage and conserve our forests and rangelands in the face of change and we want your input and feedback.

Today, with an ever-changing land base influenced by increased pressures from cumulative effects, climate change and changing societal values, it's more important than ever to make sure we are managing B.C.'s public forests and rangelands sustainably.

The FRPA framework defines how legislation, regulations and policy work together across the landscape. It applies to all public forests and rangelands to anyone who holds an agreement under the *Forest Act* or *Range Act*. It also applies to private land associated with woodlot licences and tree farm licences. We need to make sure FRPA continues to provide economic, environmental, cultural and social benefits to B.C.'s communities and Indigenous Nations. We are proposing changes to improve FRPA in order to:

- Clarify government's objectives for forest and range resources
- Improve information sharing in forest planning
- Ensure those who manage forest and range resources on the ground are accountable for achieving desired outcomes
- Increase opportunities for communities to engage in the planning processes

By making changes to FRPA, we are also striving to advance reconciliation with Indigenous Nations and to enhance their ability to participate in forest and range management. Indigenous Nations and their traditional knowledge have an important role to play in stewardship. Improving FRPA is an important component of the Province's approach to supporting implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action.

Some changes to FRPA are already underway. Over the last decade, the Province received broad feedback that has informed improvements. Amendments to FRPA introduced in spring 2019 will provide more frequent and reliable opportunities for public review and comment on forest stewardship plans and woodlot licence plans. In addition, government's ability to manage forest and range activities will be strengthened. However, more changes are needed.

### What is the FRPA Framework?

The FRPA framework defines how legislation, regulations and policy work together across the landscape.

# PROPOSED CHANGES

The proposed changes will improve the effectiveness of FRPA in governing sustainable management of B.C.'s forests and rangelands.

## Gaining the Public's Trust in Forest Management

It is important that improvements to FRPA address the public's desire to have access to information about proposed forest operations, and to have a meaningful say in the planning of those operations. There are an increasing number of users of the land base who are directly or indirectly affected by forest and range planning and operations. These users have let government know that the existing FRPA model has hindered their access to information about proposed operations such as cutblock and road locations, site plans, and supporting assessments.

Changes to FRPA that enhance the transparency and effectiveness of public engagement in operational planning will assist with building public trust of the forest management framework.



## Introducing a Framework for Landscape-level Forest Planning

Since FRPA was introduced in 2004, the provincial land used for logging and building roads has faced increased pressures from a variety of resource users. We are increasingly experiencing the cumulative effects of forest operations on water, wildlife habitat, biodiversity and visual quality; and, we are witness to the catastrophic effects of climate-induced natural disturbances such as wildfires and insect infestations. In the context of these challenges, resource communities and Indigenous Nations are demanding a stronger say in how our forests are managed.

While FRPA has provided a sound framework for managing forest resources at the stand or site level, collaborative planning remains a challenge at the landscape level, such as across watersheds and timber supply areas. Planning at the landscape level is essential to managing cumulative effects and the impacts of climate change, to minimizing conflicts between forest licensees and other resource users and ensuring government's objectives for forest resources are achieved over time.

### What is Landscape-level Planning?

Landscape-level planning is the process of establishing clear objectives for the management of forest resource values over a defined landscape, such as a watershed or timber supply area. These objectives are informed by land-use plans for the area, by government objectives for resource values that are set in law and by the input of Indigenous Nations, communities and industry stakeholders. The management objectives in landscape-level plans inform the proposed forest operations of agreement holders, such as the size and location of cutblocks and roads, and reforestation strategies.



# Strengthening the Ability of Government to Oversee Forest and Range Practices

FRPA sets out planning and practice requirements that are intended to assure sustainable use and conservation of 11 resource values: biodiversity, cultural heritage, fish/riparian, timber, visual quality, wildlife, water quality, resource features, recreation, forage and associated plants, and soils.

To date, FRPA has relied on agreement holders and their professional staff to protect the public interest in the absence of clear government objectives or direction on management of local resource values. They have also been responsible to co-ordinate their operational planning across the landscape and to adjudicate conflicts with other resource users.

The proposed improvements place this responsibility on government. Government decision makers will be responsible managing forest and range activities that reflect and protect the public interest. This includes establishing objectives and balancing competing interests for resource values, resolving conflicts between forest licensees and other resource users, and preventing unnecessary risks of harm to resource values or the public.

## Links to Other Government Initiatives

Improvements to FRPA will strengthen sustainability tools that support other provincial, regional and local initiatives.

For example, FRPA continues to support initiatives aimed at:

- Conserving the habitat of species-at-risk and other important wildlife
- Protecting water quality and quantity for communities and Indigenous Nations
- Conserving the biodiversity associated with old-growth forests
- Supporting revitalization of the forest sector on the Coast and in the Interior

In the next section on *Opportunities for Input*, we will explore these key areas further and will solicit your ideas and feedback.



## Renewal:

(noun)

The act or process of making changes to something in order to improve it so that it becomes more successful.

# OPPORTUNITIES FOR INPUT: WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK

## Climate Change and Resilient Landscapes

It is important that the FRPA framework have the necessary flexibility to enable proactive adaptation of forest and range plans and practices to existing and emerging challenges associated with climate change.

Integrating climate change considerations into planning and practices would enhance the health, resilience and adaptability of forest and range ecosystems and landscapes to natural disturbance events such as wildfires, insect infestations, disease, drought and floods. It would also provide assurance that tree species selected for reforestation are adapted to current and future climates, and that both plant and animal species can migrate as their habitat shifts with climate change.

Adapting the FRPA framework to incorporate climate change considerations would have numerous benefits, such as:

- Mitigating forest losses associated with climate change and natural disturbance events on timber and forage supply, wildlife, water and other values
- Creating more resilient forest landscapes that continue to provide sustainable benefits to communities and Indigenous Nations over the long term
- Enhancing the economic benefits associated with carbon management and fibre utilization
- Improving public awareness of the effects of climate change on forest and range ecosystems and the importance of adapting forest and range management to a changing climate

### RESILIENT ECOSYSTEMS

Resilient ecosystems are able to absorb, recover from and adapt to stress caused by climate change, human activity and other agents of change. Resilient ecosystems continue to provide the basic services, products and benefits society depends on and values.

Approaches to enhancing ecosystem resilience and productivity under FRPA could include: planting climatically-suitable and diverse tree species; retaining forest connectivity among landscapes; monitoring and controlling excessive natural disturbances; prioritizing the harvesting of disturbance-susceptible trees; and, ensuring roads and bridges can withstand extreme weather events.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How should the Province identify opportunities and priorities for adapting forest management to a changing climate, such as mitigating the effects of beetle infestations, drought and fire?

What factors should be considered in the planning of forest operations to reduce the risks of wildfire around your community?

# Landscape-Level Planning

Incorporating landscape-level planning into the FRPA framework would enable co-ordinated planning of forest operations between multiple forest licensees within a defined landscape such as a timber supply area.

Landscape-level plans would incorporate direction from strategic land use plans, which establish land use direction and resource management objectives for public lands that apply to all natural resource sectors.

The intent of landscape-level planning is to resolve overlapping government direction, and co-ordinate resource management objectives, targets and strategies at the landscape level.

Landscape-level planning would provide many benefits to British Columbians, such as:

- Mitigating the cumulative effects of forest operations on ecological and social values, such as protecting old growth forests, habitat for species-at-risk like mountain caribou and water quality and quantity
- Reducing forest losses associated with climate change and natural disturbance events such as wildfires, insect infestations, droughts and floods
- Enabling forward-thinking planning and better responses to reduce current and future risks and uncertainties associated with climate change
- Enabling government-to-government collaboration with Indigenous Nations throughout the planning process to ensure Indigenous land uses and traditional and local knowledge are fully considered
- Allowing for community stakeholders to participate in landscape-level planning
- Helping to create certainty for current and future forest operations

It is proposed that landscape-level plans be approved by government, while the process would be collaborative with industry, stakeholders and Indigenous peoples. Once landscape-level plans are approved, they would inform forest operations schedules and site plans prepared by agreement holders.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

A vital step in landscape-level planning is understanding what is important to the public. Based on what is important to you or your community, what information on the condition of resource values (such as species-at-risk habitat) do you think is necessary to support the planning process?

How would you like to be involved in the planning process?

Resource roads are a valuable asset in the province as they provide access for the forest industry, ranchers, other resource users, and the public for commercial and recreation purposes. Yet, these same road networks are costly to maintain and have potential negative impacts on wildlife, water quality and fish habitat. What values do you believe are important to consider when planning new roads, road use and maintenance, and deactivation in your area?







## Public Trust

Enhancing the public's trust in forest and range management is an important outcome of the proposed changes to the FRPA framework.

While forest and range practices in British Columbia are generally sound, and while some agreement holders perform to a higher standard than required, circumstances on the land base have changed and the public's interest in natural resource management has evolved.

Proposed changes aim to provide all British Columbians with timely and transparent information about proposed forest and range activities and meaningful opportunities for public participation in planning. Proposed changes also aim to enhance accountability for consistently good planning and practices, and to ensure intended outcomes described in operational and landscape-level plans are being achieved and communicated to the public. Some of the benefits of these proposed changes to the public include:

- Increased opportunities for the public to influence forest and range activities at the landscape and operational levels
- Public access to proposed operational plans and maps, including cutblock and road locations and schedules
- Monitoring and reporting of results on the ground

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How can the Province improve transparency and timelines of information regarding proposed operational and landscape-level objectives, plans and results?

What information will help inform your feedback on plans that may impact you, your community or your business (e.g., maps of cutblocks and roads planned in your area, hydrological assessments, wildlife habitat areas or recreation opportunities, etc.)?





# Stewardship:

(noun)

An ethic that embodies the responsible and balanced planning and management of resources. The concepts of stewardship can be applied to the environment and nature, economics, health, property, information and more.

## Resource Values and Objectives

A key goal of improving FRPA is to strengthen the objectives and supporting regulations that govern how we manage and conserve forest and range resource values. Currently, FRPA sets out objectives and/or regulations for 11 resource values: soil, timber, water, biodiversity, riparian and fish, wildlife, visual quality, cultural heritage, resource features, recreation and forage and associated plants.

It is important to strengthen and potentially expand these objectives and regulations so that FRPA's rules for planning and practices enable us to:

- Address the current and emerging effects of climate change
- Mitigate the cumulative effects of forest and range operations on ecosystems
- Continue to provide for the economic, social, cultural and environmental needs of all British Columbians

## DISCUSSION QUESTION

What additional values should be considered in FRPA that will allow us to manage forest and range practices in a better way?





## Oversight and Accountability

FRPA governs the sustainable management of B.C.'s forest and range resources and is an integral component of the ministry's forest sector revitalization and renewal initiatives. It is important to consider that FRPA was developed to address issues that are different than those faced by today's provincial land managers. Over the last decade, the Province has received feedback from various surveys, reviews, investigative reports and Forest Practices Board reports that have called for amending FRPA so that it may be more responsive to new opportunities and challenges, both now and in the foreseeable future.

Much of the feedback received has highlighted the need to enhance government's oversight of forest and range activities. This means ensuring that the Minister and delegated decision makers have the legal mechanisms they need to balance competing values and interests on the land base, to hold industry accountable for achieving intended results and to prevent unintended outcomes or adverse impacts to FRPA values. This also means ensuring decision-makers have adequate legal mechanisms to enable and promote innovation and adaptive management.

Strengthening government oversight and industry accountability is essential to ensuring public trust in forest and range management.

## DISCUSSION QUESTION

In what ways should the Province strengthen government oversight and industry accountability regarding forest and range activities to better address the challenges of climate change and the interests of all British Columbians?

# HOW TO PARTICIPATE

You can help shape the changes we're making to FRPA by reading this document, thinking about the discussion questions and submitting your feedback on the opportunities for change.

Visit: [engage.gov.bc.ca/forestandrangepactices](https://engage.gov.bc.ca/forestandrangepactices)

Deadline: July 15, 2019 at 4 p.m.

## NEXT STEPS

Feedback on this discussion paper will inform our proposed changes to FRPA to ensure they serve the interests and values of Indigenous Nations and all British Columbians.

We will summarize all Indigenous Nations and public feedback received in a *What We Heard Report*, and we'll also release a report that outlines the intended direction of FRPA changes later this year.

Thank you for helping us to improve forest and range management in B.C.

## Resilience:

(noun)

A resilient forest or range landscape is one that can continue to provide resources and ecological functions over time as climates change, although the species composition and structure of that ecosystem may change.





We can no longer apply yesterday's thinking to today's challenges. We need to shift our approach away from the status quo.

Minister Doug Donaldson

Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations  
and Rural Development



# *FOREST AND RANGE PRACTICES ACT* IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE

**Mailing Address:**

PO Box 9391, Stn Prov Gov't, Victoria, BC V8W 9M3

You are invited to participate in this discussion and submit comments until  
July 15, 2019 at 4 p.m. at: [engage.gov.bc.ca/forestandrangepactices](https://engage.gov.bc.ca/forestandrangepactices)



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