

What We Heard

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



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

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Executive Summary

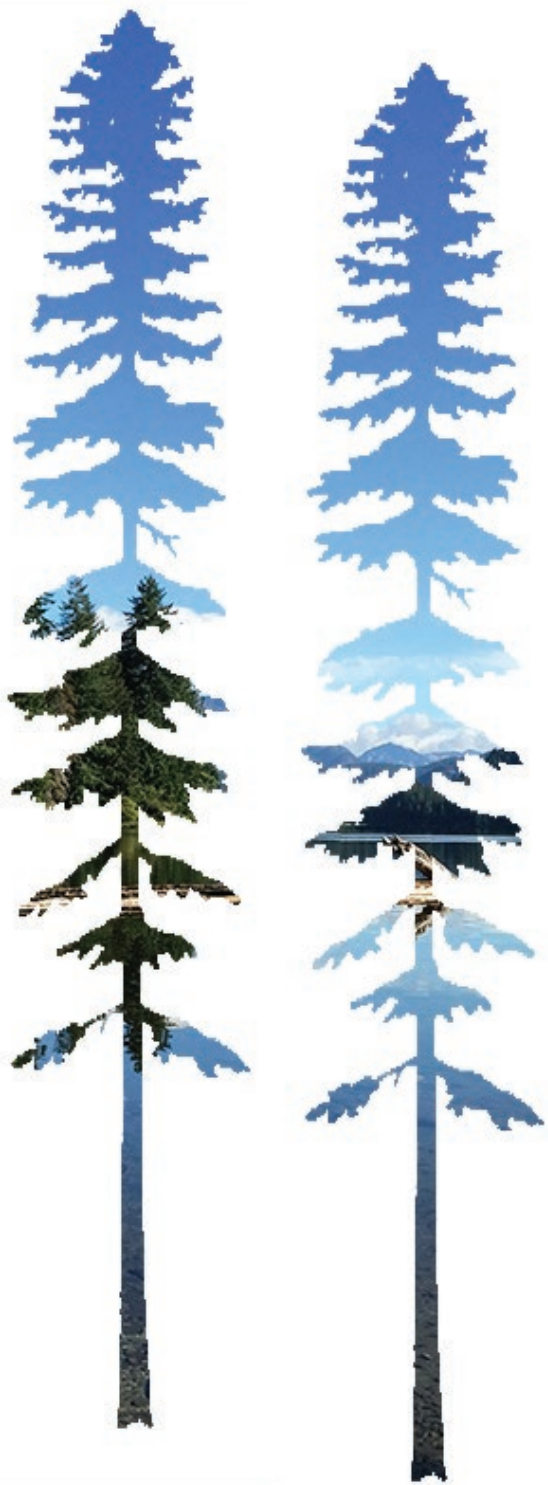
This report provides an overview of what the Province heard from the public and stakeholders during two months of engagement (May to July 2019) on how to improve the *Forest and Range Practices Act* (FRPA). Through this process, we solicited input so the legislation would continue to serve the public trust in an era of change – changing land uses, changing needs and interests of Indigenous Nations and communities, and a changing climate.

We heard from many interested individuals representing a wide range of interests or sectors. This includes environmental organizations, recreation organizations, special interest groups, forest and range industries, professional associations, local governments, the Forest Practices Board, and government staff. Separate engagement processes with Indigenous Nations and stakeholders continue to inform legislative, regulation and policy development.

The following themes reflect key changes the public and stakeholders would like to see in FRPA and the policy framework that supports its implementation:

- Address **climate change** by embracing ecosystem-based management, managing the land base for resilient ecosystems and managing forests to promote forest health and reduce the risk of wildfires.
- Implement **landscape-level planning** to mitigate cumulative effects, adapt to climate change, integrate consideration of multiple resource values and manage road access, in collaboration with Indigenous Nations, communities, industries and other affected resource users.
- Enhance **public trust** in forest development planning by improving forest stewardship and enhancing public access to information about proposed operations.





- Address **non-timber resource values** by managing rangelands to enhance forage supply and access, recognizing tourism interests, and better protecting other resource values important to Indigenous Nations, communities and other resource users.
- Address **forest sector needs** by clarifying government objectives for FRPA values, maintaining the results-based model and accommodating the unique characteristics of small tenures.
- Strengthen **oversight and accountability** under FRPA by enhancing government's authority to prevent adverse outcomes, by better utilizing existing accountability mechanisms (e.g., professional reliance, enforcement and evaluation) and by strengthening government's capacity to make science-based decisions.

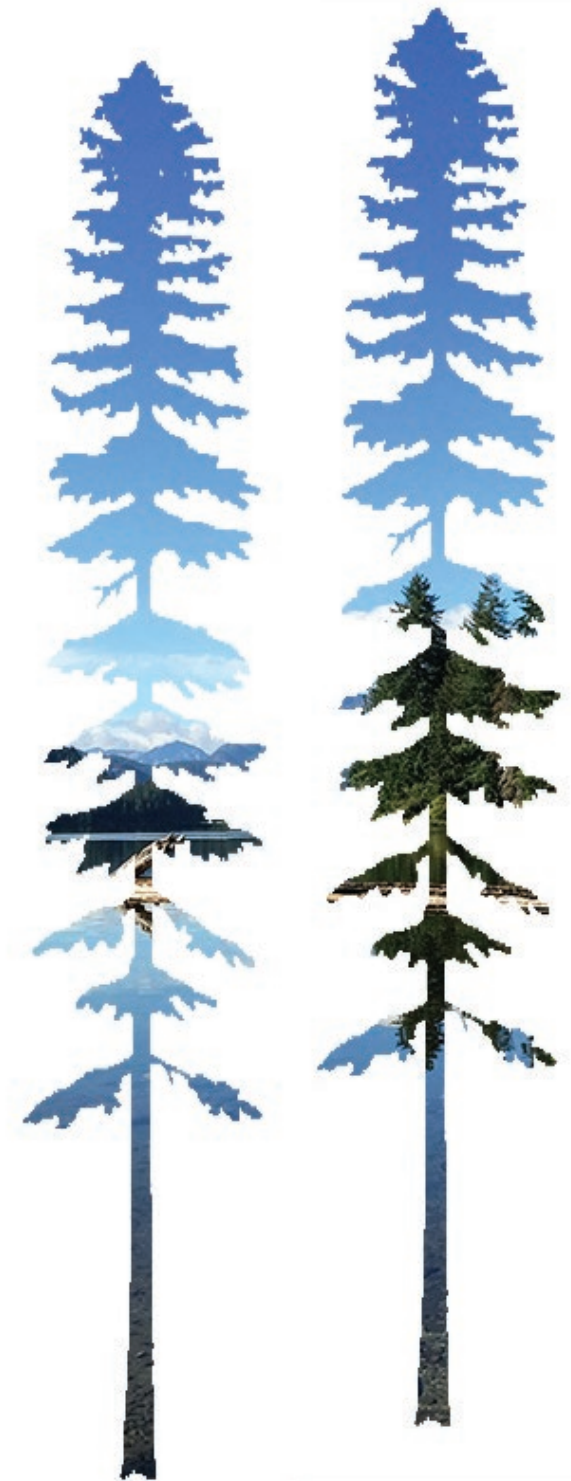
The intention of the proposed changes to the *Forest and Range Practices Act* is to address many of the themes that were identified through the engagement process, primarily through the implementation of the landscape-level planning (LLP). LLPs will enhance the ability of stakeholders and the public to influence forest and range development planning by working with government to collaboratively establish clear objectives for the management of forest and range resource values over a defined landscape, such as a timber supply area. Over time, LLPs will replace existing forest stewardship plans (FSPs), helping to address many of the challenges raised during the engagement process regarding the current forest planning regime.

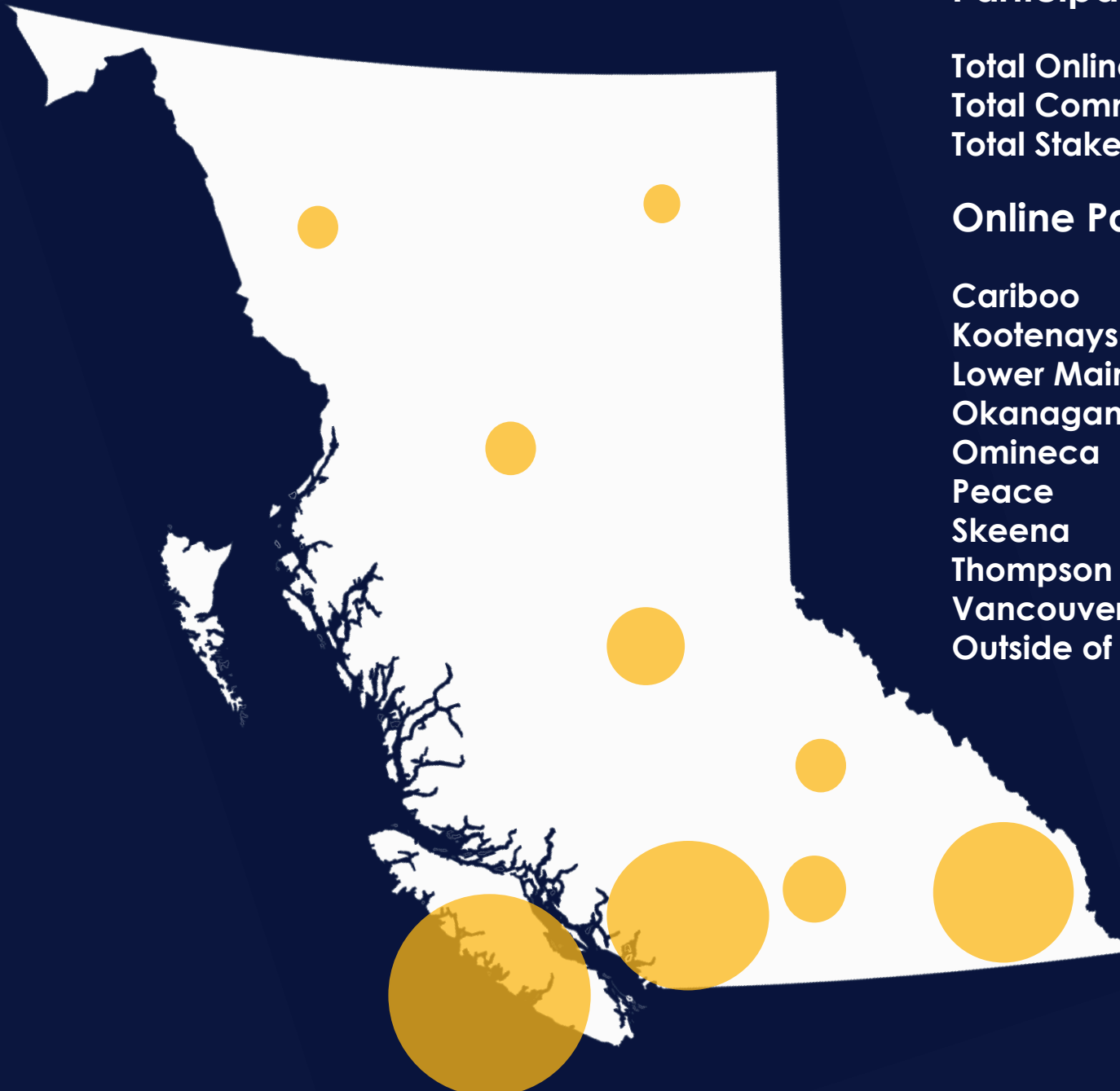
Introduction

In May 2019, the Province released a public discussion paper on the *Forest and Range Practices Act* (FRPA) Improvement Initiative and solicited feedback for seven weeks. The intent of the engagement process was to gain insights from the public and FRPA stakeholders on how best to improve FRPA so the laws governing forest and range practices continue to serve the public trust in an era of change – changing uses of the public land base, changing needs and interests of Indigenous Nations and communities, and a changing climate.

The discussion paper was accompanied by an online questionnaire and written submissions were also solicited. Online comments and written submissions were received from individuals and organizations that represented the public and a broad array of interests and sectors, including the environment, tourism and recreation, communities, forest and range industries, the mining industry, resource professionals, and the Forest Practices Board.

Through separate engagement processes, the Province continues to meet with Indigenous Nations across B.C., the Minister's Practices Advisory Council (which represents the Province and a cross-section of non-government FRPA stakeholders), and the Resource Stewardship and Tenures Committee (which represents Government and the forest industry). Discussions with Indigenous Nations and these FRPA stakeholder committees will continue throughout the drafting of Act and regulation changes to ensure their perspectives are considered.





Participation by the Numbers

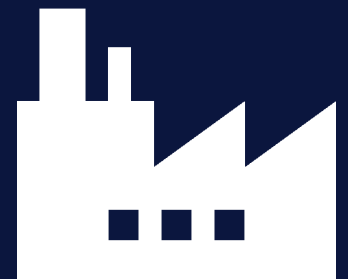
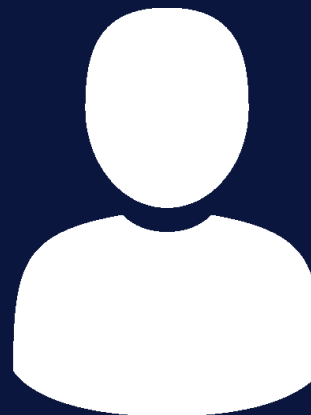
Total Online Responses	2,390
Total Comments Received	21,500
Total Stakeholder Submissions	51

Online Participation by Region

Cariboo	5%
Kootenays	17%
Lower Mainland	18%
Okanagan	4%
Omineca	3%
Peace	1%
Skeena	2%
Thompson	3%
Vancouver Island	38%
Outside of B.C.	9%

Online Participation by Affiliation

Academic institution	4%
Agriculture	5%
Environmental organization	11%
Federal & provincial government	4%
Hunter/trapper/guide	5%
Indigenous	3%*
Industry	9%
Local government	3%
Non-affiliated	18%
Professional association	4%
Recreation – motorized	5%
Recreation – non-motorized	20%
Tourism	9%



*The majority of feedback from Indigenous Nations was collected during a parallel engagement process and summarized in the *What We Heard from Indigenous Nations* document. Contact EngageFRPA@gov.bc.ca for more information.

What We Heard - Themes in Public and Stakeholder Feedback

The following broad themes reflect key changes the public and stakeholders would like to see in the legislation and policy framework governing forest and range practices in B.C.:

- Address **climate change** by embracing ecosystem-based management, managing the land base for resilient ecosystems and managing forests to promote forest health and reduce the risk of wildfires.
- Implement **landscape-level planning** to mitigate cumulative effects, adapt to climate change, integrate consideration of multiple resource values, and manage road access, in collaboration with Indigenous Nations, communities, industries and other affected resource users.
- Enhance **public trust** in forest development planning by improving forest stewardship and enhancing public access to information about proposed operations.
- Address **non-timber resource values** by managing rangelands to enhance forage supply and access, recognizing tourism interests, and better protecting other resource values important to Indigenous Nations, communities and other resource users.
- Address **forest sector needs** by clarifying government objectives for FRPA values, maintaining the results-based model and accommodating the unique characteristics of small tenures.
- Strengthen **oversight and accountability** under FRPA by enhancing government's authority to prevent adverse outcomes, by better utilizing existing accountability mechanisms (e.g., professional reliance, enforcement and evaluation) and by strengthening government's capacity to make science-based decisions.

For each of these broad themes, the 'In Your Own Words' provides a high-level synthesis of key comments made by individuals and stakeholder organizations. Some of the feedback received does not directly relate to the legislative amendments and this report includes a summary of these comments and how they may be addressed.



What We Are Doing Moving Forward

Proposed changes to FRPA have been informed by the engagement process and may address many of the comments received by the public, stakeholder and by Indigenous Nations primarily through the implementation of a new landscape-level planning (LLP) regime. LLPs will enhance the ability of public, stakeholders and Indigenous Nations to influence forest and range development planning by working with government to collaboratively establish clear objectives for the management of forest and range resource values over a defined landscape, such as a timber supply area (TSA). Over time, LLPs will replace existing forest stewardship plans (FSPs), helping to address many of the challenges identified through the engagement process regarding the current forest and range planning regime.

Landscape-level planning will facilitate co-ordinated planning of forest operations between multiple licensees within a defined area and help to resolve overlapping activities, clarify government direction and align resource management objectives, targets and strategies. The new landscape-level planning regime is expected to be more effective than the current forest stewardship planning model in: translating or considering strategic land-use objectives, promoting ecological resilience in the face of climate change; mitigating the effects of natural disturbance events on forests; and, mitigating the cumulative effects of forest development on environmental and social values. It will also increase efficiency in subsequent forest operations and in realizing the allowable annual cut (AAC) established by the Province's Chief Forester.

Until such a time as landscape-level plans are in place, the current FSP model will continue to govern forest planning and practices. Therefore, changes to FRPA will also enhance the existing FSP model by clarifying and broadening government objectives for resource values, by enhancing access to information about proposed forest operations, and by ensuring forest and range plans and practices protect environmental and social values, public health and safety, and the interests of Indigenous Nations, stakeholders and the public.




Next Steps

The Province is committed to working with Indigenous Nations, industry, stakeholders and the public throughout the multi-year lifespan of the FRPA Initiative. The development of regulation and policy, to bring into force changes outlined in the legislation, will continue through 2021 and will help to provide further detail regarding a new landscape-level planning regime for forestry and range.





In Your Own Words

A young green plant with several leaves is growing out of a mound of dark, charred soil. The background is a blurred expanse of similar dark, charred ground, suggesting a landscape after a fire. The plant's leaves are a vibrant green, contrasting with the dark, ashy soil.

The Province should rely heavily on scientific, evidence-based studies and research to come up with strategies that can not only be observed in a research-based method, but can be evaluated for efficacy in the same manner.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND RESILIENT LANDSCAPES

Embrace **ecosystem-based management** with an emphasis on conserving biodiversity, old growth and wildlife habitat across landscapes.

Manage the land base for **resilient ecosystems** and **carbon sequestration** in the face of climate change and natural disturbance events.

“Manage for ecosystem connectivity across landscapes.”

“Restore damaged ecosystems.”

“Restrict harvesting and roads in watersheds with sensitive streams, wetlands, and fisheries values, and with critical habitat for species at risk.”

“Add an objective to maintain water quality, quantity and timing of flow.”

“Establish an objective to maintain forest carbon stores.”

“Plant a diversity of climate-adapted tree species, including deciduous and native species.”

“Avoid planting trees where regeneration is unlikely due to climate change.”

“Prioritize harvesting of dead or diseased trees.”

“Use silvicultural systems that promote disturbance-resilient landscapes.”

“Use biogeoclimatic (BEC) predictive mapping to assist the migration of plants and wildlife to their future habitat.”

“Enhance biological and ecological diversity of landscapes by integrating forage and plant communities into forest landscapes.”



"Establish objectives to mitigate wildfire risk and maintain forest health across landscapes."

"Require licensees to consider wildfire risks in the WUI during operational planning."

"Design harvest patterns to create or complement natural fire breaks (e.g., roads, corridors, lakes, rivers)."

"Remove flammable species (e.g., lodgepole pine, hemlock, balsam, spruce, cedar), small diameter trees and surface fuels (e.g., underbrush, deadfall, low-hanging limbs)."

"Reforest with mix of ecologically suitable, fire-resistant deciduous tree species; use varying stand densities."

"Promote grazing of fine fuels."

"Use prescribed burning."

"Re-seed disturbed areas with shorter grass species."

"Promote practices that improve forest health and vigour, reduce mortality, lessen over-crowding and rely on natural regeneration."

Manage forests to reduce the risk of wildfires in the **wild-urban land interface** (WUI) and to promote **forest health**.



An aerial photograph of a wide river valley. The river flows from the background towards the foreground, winding slightly. The valley is flanked by steep, forested mountains. In the foreground, a dirt road or path runs along the left side of the river, with a cleared area of brown earth and some young trees. The sky is filled with large, white, fluffy clouds that partially obscure the mountain peaks. The overall scene is a natural, scenic landscape.

LANDSCAPE-LEVEL PLANNING

We need an inventory and mapping of economic values, cultural values, critical ecosystems and species at risk habitat on which landscape-level planning is based.

"Prioritize protection of biodiversity, water, species at risk, wildlife and recreation at the landscape level."

"Spatially locate old growth management areas to enhance forest connectivity."

"Manage the land base for multiple use and abundance of all resource values."

"Rely on forest professionals to collaborate with scientists and FRPA stakeholders to identify strategies to adapt forest planning to climate change."

Implement **landscape-level planning** to mitigate the **cumulative effects** of forest development on environmental and social values, to adapt forest management to **climate change** and to enable **integrated resource management**.

"Engage affected stakeholders early in planning process (before objectives for values are established)."

"Establish stakeholder advisory panels."

"Host local public meetings and input forums."

"Enhance public and stakeholder awareness of review opportunities through social media."

"Include socio-economic analyses in decision-making (consider jobs, recreation and community stability)."

Enable meaningful **collaboration** with Indigenous Nations, local communities, industries and other affected resource users during forest development planning.




Plan **access for resource roads** to address industrial needs and community and Indigenous interests, and to **reduce forest road networks** where necessary to mitigate cumulative effects on environmental values and at-risk wildlife.

“When deciding whether to maintain or deactivate roads, consider: industry’s needs for ongoing access, recreation access needs, environmental risks (terrain stability, water quality, fish habitat) and proximity to critical wildlife habitat.”

“Engage communities and other road users in decisions about which roads to maintain for recreation use and which to deactivate for environmental reasons.”

“Put a portion of stumpage fees into road maintenance and deactivation fund.”





Keep the public informed and listen to what the citizens are saying and not just record it.

PUBLIC TRUST

Improve the **quality, understandability** and responsiveness of **forest stewardship plans** to public feedback so the public and decision-makers can evaluate whether the plans meet government objectives and the public interest.

“Require licensees and decision-makers to demonstrate how Indigenous and public feedback informed operational plans and forest operations.”

Enhance **public access to information** that supports all levels of forest planning, from landscape-level to cutblock and road level.

“Make the following information publicly available: cutblock and road proposals, including road deactivation plans; environmental assessments (hydrology, terrain stability); resource inventories (e.g., recreation, wildlife, species at risk, forage, timber); forest reserves, including parks, protected areas and FRPA retention areas.”





Factors to consider include; the presence of sensitive habitat and species at risk; existing road density; visual barriers and non-timber values.

RESOURCE OBJECTIVES AND VALUES

"Establish a government objective for forage resources."

"Protect soil by optimizing water retention and reducing soil exposure."

"Mitigate forest ingress within grasslands through ecosystem restoration."

"Integrate forage and targeted grazing into forest landscapes (allow variable stocking standards)."

"Establish an objective for tourism resources to maintain: the integrity of adjacent forest landscapes; travel corridors; viewsapes; old growth forests; wildlife viewing areas; and, significant recreation features like snow fields, trails and lakes."

"Broaden recreation provisions and definitions in FRPA to include commercial recreation (tourism) resources and features."

"Strengthen conservation provisions for key resources: water quality, quantity and timing of flow; fish and fish habitat; wildlife, species at risk, and their habitat; cultural heritage resources, including Indigenous plants; and remove the limitation 'without unduly reducing the supply of timber' on government objectives for non-timber values."

Manage rangelands (including forested grazing areas) to **enhance forage supply** and access.

Recognize tourism (commercial recreation) as a FRPA value to manage for in-forest development planning.

Better protect resource values Indigenous Nations, communities and other resource users rely on for sustenance and economic, social, cultural and spiritual well-being.



"Clarify ambiguous or conflicting government objectives and establish hierarchy of objectives."

"Review existing land designations for effectiveness and remove or move ineffective designations."

"Spatialize areas of forest development and constraints within landscape-level plans."

"Enable flexibility, innovation and adaptive management in forest practices."

"Assure certainty of access to timber and cost-effective operations."

Clarify and complete **government objectives** for FRPA values, and maintain the **results-based model**, to enable industry to meet government objectives while assuring **certainty of access to timber** and **cost-effective** operations.

"Lessen land base constraints and enable alternative performance requirements for woodlots."

"Allow community forests to create their own landscape-level plans (consider utility of "management plans" required under the Forest Act)."

Address the **unique characteristics** of small tenures (**woodlots and community forests**) in forest planning and practice provisions.





OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The Ministry must take back full oversight and accountability. This means more staff to work on the ground with licensees.

"Give the Minister authority to: assess the adequacy of actions to address public comments on FSPs and forest operations maps; and intervene during forest operations to mitigate risks to public safety and the environment."

Strengthen **government's authority** to assess the adequacy of operational plans and to intervene during operations to prevent adverse impacts.

"Rely on FRPA's existing accountability mechanisms – professional reliance, compliance and enforcement, effectiveness evaluations and Forest Practices Board audits."

Utilize existing accountability mechanisms under FRPA.

"Expand the use of professional certification, assurance and conformance statements and other similar mechanisms."

"Enhance working relationships between government staff and forest licensees."

"Use policy changes under FRPA to encourage robust monitoring, data collection, and evidence gathering, and enhance the transparency of such information, to support planning, engagement, and decision-making by forest professionals, FRPA stakeholders and government."

Strengthen government **capacity** for making **science-based decisions** under FRPA.



Comments Outside the Scope of the FRPA Initiative

The following comments are not within the scope of FRPA changes, however, will be considered in the context of other related initiatives such as land use planning, forest sector revitalization, special management of selected values and government stewardship programs.

Comments	Initiatives/Programs They will Inform
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update obsolete or outdated land use plans 	Modernizing government's land use planning program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prohibit logging of old growth forests Create <i>Western & Indigenous Science Council</i> to recommend old growth conservation targets and to evaluate the effectiveness of legal objective 	Strategic review of B.C.'s management of old growth forests ¹
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update predictive fire-risk mapping to inform priorities for deployment of firefighting resources 	Government's wildfire suppression program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in community-led reforestation and stand enhancement programs that support climate change adaptation Create tenure opportunities that enable communities to manage wildland-urban interface areas Work with communities to designate and maintain important inactive roads as recreation roads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coast Forest Sector Revitalization and Interior Forest Sector Renewal initiatives Forest Carbon Initiative Forests For Tomorrow
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect the integrity of agricultural use within the Agricultural Land Reserve 	The ALR protected through the <i>Agricultural Land Reserve Act</i> . Where forest and range practices overlap, the ALR will be addressed through planning.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prohibit use of toxic pesticides and herbicides 	The ministry is currently conducting a review of glyphosphate use in forest management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest provincial resources in research, monitoring, inventories and other science to support landscape-level planning 	Government's research, monitoring and assessment programs

¹ This independent, two-person, old growth strategic review was initiated in September 2019. Outcomes of this review will inform the development of broad public policy regarding old growth management in B.C., which may result in future changes to FRPA's biodiversity provisions.



FOREST AND RANGE PRACTICES ACT IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE

For more information about what the Province heard from the public and stakeholders, visit: engage.gov.bc.ca/forestandrangepactices

For additional information, please contact us at: **EngageFRPA@gov.bc.ca**



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