



WATER SUPPLY ASSOCIATION OF B.C.

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Government Communications and Public Engagement
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Attn: Citizen Engagement

Subject: Feedback on proposed changes to improve Forest Range Practices Act.

The Water Supply Association of B.C. (WSABC) represents the interests of water purveyors primarily from the BC Southern Interior. The WSABC promotes the protection of source water supplies, the safety of drinking water, appropriate water treatment technology and the competent management of our valued water resources. Proposed changes to the Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA) have the potential to directly affect WSABC members who include Municipalities, Regional Districts, Improvement Districts, and private Water Systems in the Southern Interior. The WSABC and members have historically worked with the Provincial government to adapt to the on-going changes for better water management. The WSABC appreciates the opportunity to provide you with comments in regards to upcoming revisions to the FRPA.

The Province reports that 95% of our 55 million hectares of diverse forests are publicly owned with 466 designated community watersheds (CWS) within B.C. The majority of Local Government and other water providers in BC access their water from multi-purpose, multi-jurisdictional watersheds. Local water providers are mandated under Operating Permits to provide safe drinking water to customers. Water purveyors operate primarily under the regulatory framework of the Local Government Act, the Water Sustainability Act, Drinking Water Protection Act, and the Drinking Water Protection Regulations. The addition of other regulatory factors such as those proposed in this update of the FRPA add to the complexity of regulatory authority over water.

The Health Authority mandates water purveyors to develop high-level Source Water Protection Plans. The regulatory framework from the FRPA forms a key part of these Protection Plans. The Act outlines *how all forest and range practices and resource-based activities are to be conducted on Crown land in B.C., while ensuring protection of everything in and on them, such as plants, animals and ecosystems.*

With this, the FRPA must recognize the priority value of water at the resource level, both as drinking water and as water for the environment. Our water purveyors have noted regularly in their operations that many licensees and other tenures do not follow best management practices described under the FRPA, specifically within the immediate proximity of community drinking water resources. It is not uncommon to experience increased flooding and washouts caused by poor implementation practices. In addition, we are all experiencing the impacts of

climate change that have shifted runoff patterns, snow levels, storm frequencies and intensities. A clear direction for managing all activities in our community forests is essential for a future that is economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.

As part of this engagement process, the WSABC has compiled feedback from our membership. We hope this will assist the Province in addressing some of the issues we face and address them in this update of the Act. The proposed changes we believe to be relevant include:

- Gaining the Public's Trust in Forest Management;
- Introducing a Framework for Landscape-Level Forest Planning;
- Strengthening the Ability of Government to Oversee Forest and Range Practices;
- Links to and integration with other Government Initiatives;
- Addressing Climate Change and developing Resilient Landscapes;
- Landscape-Level Planning, Public Trust, Resource Values and Objectives, and Oversight and Accountability.

Forest and range management practices or any activity or disturbance on Crown Lands within a Community Watershed (CWS) will also require the amendment of all supporting policy documentation, some of which we comment upon in our feedback:

- Forest and Range Evaluation Program;
- Forest Planning and Practices Regulations;
- Forest Stewardship Plans;
- Land Resource Management Plan;
- Forest Recreation Regulation, and;
- Timber Supply (annual allowable cut).

For the above activities, water resource management and drinking water protection must be addressed. The following are suggested policy adjustments for consideration within the Act:

- **Hydrogeomorphic Risk Assessments:** Consider modifying the current watershed and Hydrogeomorphic Risk Assessment process:
 - Make the process compulsory, enforced and openly accessible with a review required at an interval of 5 years or less;
 - Require a comprehensive evaluation integrated at the landscape level. This evaluation should function for each sub basin considering above and below snowline, diversion points and expanded to include community watersheds (CWS), and also all watersheds with communities that could be impacted below;
 - Plans should assess hydrological impacts with the capability for re-evaluation, measurements built-in to confirm forest recovery expectations, and capacity to report on stand-level hydrologic recovery.
- **Cumulative Impact Analyses:** A cumulative impact analysis is needed to ensure all land-based disturbance activities are recognized. This requires engagement and collaboration of all licensees. Our water purveyors have to manage and frequently obtain authorizations other than forestry (e.g. recreational, silvopasture and fire reduction mitigation).

- **Equivalent Clear-cut Area (ECA)**
 - Recognition that this target is a watershed independent estimation and requires a specific cumulative effect assessment at each site, sub-basin or landscape level scale;
 - As long as ECA's remain a target measurement, they must be planned interactively with all other licensees with the Province to ensure all harvest activity, including small-scale salvage is accounted for;
 - A continuous evaluation process is needed with reporting annually.

- **Climatic Impacts:** Considering our flux of climate conditions and catastrophic flooding situations in recent years, 5 or 10-year renewable plans may be more appropriate than the current 10 -20 year renewal frequency.

- **Cumulative Impacts on Water:** Forest development plans should address cumulative impacts ultimately showing up in the physical, biological and chemical components in water quality, timing and volume of flow and ability of environment to naturally mitigate. This aspect would require Provincial leadership to develop, manage and regulate.

- **Forest Stewardship Plans (FSP):**
 - The objectives and practice requirements must include addressing the priority value of water quality and quantity;
 - Provincial objectives in community watersheds must prioritize protection of the water resource;
 - *For example, we note the following section requiring improvement: 8.2(1) the FRPA, Forest Planning and Practices Regulation (FPPR) speaks to the prevention of cumulative hydrological effects of primary forest activities within CWS on the quantity of water or the timing of the flow and is only applicable so that it “does not unduly reduce the supply of timber from British Columbia's forests”.*
 - Assure that the FSP referral process allows water purveyors appropriate and adequate time for review and response.
 - Range Management Best Management Practices (June 2011) should be regulated to be required within a tenure holder's Range Use Plan rather than stated as expectations that these holders will practice due diligence when using Crown resources.

- **LRMP (2001):**
 - The strategic Crown land use plan for the Okanagan–Shuswap was developed in 2001. It has been 18 years since that plan was adopted. With the technical, climatic, political and social changes in the past 18 years it may be time to update that document;
 - The Province needs to provide direction for amendments recognizing community watersheds for drinking water.

- e.g. Identify management zones for all drinking water reservoirs, main stem supplies and points of diversion. Current Lakeshore Management Zones are based on size of lake only.
- **Integration/Consideration of Source Protection Plans:**

All Water Purveyors are mandated by the Provincially delegated water regulator, in our case Interior Health, to develop, update and adhere to Source Water Protection and Implementation Plans, to ensure the ongoing protection of watersheds and drinking water sources. Source Watershed Assessments are also routinely carried out by water purveyors who obtain their water from Community Watersheds;

 - These plans are required by the Province with authority delegated to the Health Authorities. These plans should be referenced and utilized in the approval and on-going management processes for the crown land decision-making within the CWS. The Provincial Public Health Officer recently issued the report “Clean, Safe and Reliable Drinking Water” which documents the many conflicting Acts and regulations regarding water and supply. It identifies the multiple jurisdictional framework and complexities for managing water. The Water Supply Association supports the Province in aligning these Acts and Regulations;
 - The Province legislation should require that available Source Water Assessment and Implementation Plans be referenced and considered during any approval process on Crown Land within community watersheds.
- **Access Management on Crown Land**

The Water Supply Association of BC has been consistent in our feedback in regard to roads, access and drainage. We reiterate the points of utmost importance to water providers:

 - A referral mechanism should be integrated into legislation ensuring there will be an opportunity for water-purveyor/stakeholder input respecting decisions made concerning road management within or within close proximity to community watersheds;
 - Roads no longer in use be properly rehabilitated to a natural state including natural drainage course restoration and road bed replanting according to established best practices. Deactivation alone, in many cases, is not a good practice in close proximity to a community’s water supply;
 - Integrative planning and consistent drainage planning are required within a community watershed. Consistent industrial road standards (including drainage), maintenance and monitoring must include climate mitigation and address compliance.
- **Increased Ministry Support:**
 - Increase the number of Natural Resource Officers to address compliance and enforcement issues;
 - The Association has concerns regarding fire-risk from industrial areas, unsanctioned off-road vehicle use and timing of these activities;
 - Increased presence and enforcement of practices within watersheds with direct hydrologic impact on communities below.

Closure

The Water Supply Association of BC recognizes and understands the multiple uses within our watersheds. We appreciate the need for healthy and sustainable resource industries such as Range and Forestry. Maintaining healthy and sustainable natural landscapes requires the practices of sustainable watershed management, which includes prioritizing and preserving water quantity and quality, and maintaining economic, social, and environmental values.

We believe it is essential for the Province to allocate the appropriate resources for the protection of our community watersheds within inclusive and integrated planning processes, and sufficient resources for monitoring and enforcement.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide stakeholder feedback on the proposed changes to the Forest Range Practices Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robert Hrasko". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Robert" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Hrasko".

Robert Hrasko, P.Eng.
Chair
Water Supply Association of BC

cc: WSABC Directors
Executive Director - WSABC