

## Forest Operations Plans – Content and Mapping Requirements

*The contents of this bulletin are for information purposes only, and this bulletin does not constitute legal advice. All users should refer to the relevant sections of current legislation referred to in this bulletin for the exact legal wording of any requirements. Government practitioners should seek legal advice from the Ministry of Attorney General, whereas industry practitioners should seek independent legal advice.*

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## 1.0 Introduction

This bulletin provides procedural guidance for the development of Forest Operations Plans (FOPs) which are required where there is an established Forest Landscape Plan (FLP). It is intended for forest professionals, government staff, and statutory decision-makers (SDMs) responsible for preparing, submitting or reviewing FOPs. This bulletin sets out the required content, mapping standards, and expectations to ensure FOPs are developed in accordance with the legislation.

The *Forest and Range Practices Act* (FRPA) and Forest Planning and Practices Regulation (FPPR) establishes the FLP framework, which replaces the Forest Stewardship Plan (FSP) regime over time. FLPs are developed by the province in consultation and cooperation with First Nations, in collaboration with agreement holders under the *Forest Act* and local communities, and with input from local stakeholders. Once established, an FLP sets strategic direction, through FOPs, for forest development within the plan area described in the FLP.

FOPs are mandatory in areas where an FLP has been established; subject to any transition provisions relating to an FSP. Agreement holders must obtain an approved FOP prior to harvesting timber/constructing a road or applying for cutting or road permits (CP/RP) in areas with an established FLP. FOPs are required only in areas where an FLP has been established and only for agreement holders under FRPA s.2.2, including timber sales managers (TSMs).

This bulletin explains the legislative and regulatory intent underlying the following requirements for a FOP:

- Content requirements under FRPA s.2.36;
- Information requirements under FPPR ss.4.03 to 4.14;
- Mapping requirements under FPPR ss.4.15 to 4.23; and
- Signature requirements under FPPR s.4.62.

The intent is to clarify expectations and ensure FOPs satisfy all applicable legislative standards for plan content and spatial data submission.

## 2.0 Preparing a FOP

The FOP is prepared by agreement holders or TSMs to communicate key details of proposed operational activities and obligations within a Forest Landscape Area (FLA). The FOP serves the following purposes:

- Describes legal obligations: Specifies required forestry practices, silviculture systems, and stocking standards as set out in FOP requirements.

- Supports transparency and engagement: Provides clear and accessible information for First Nations and the public to enable meaningful engagement, review, and comment.
- Facilitates evaluation: Enables SDMs and government staff to assess proposed activities.

This section outlines legislated requirements and procedural expectations under FRPA and the FPPR on the types of information to be included in a FOP.

**Note:** Where a FOP has multiple signatories, the FPPR requires each holder to identify their own proposed activities and provide information such as business contact details and proposed cutblocks and roads (both listed and shown on the map). As a best practice, multi-party FOPs should delineate activities by holder to support efficient review and evaluation.

## **2.1 Content Requirements of FOP**

FRPA s.2.36 and FPPR ss.4.04 to 4.37 sets out the legislative requirements for a FOP and sets out what information is required to share with First Nations, the public, and government staff.

For the purposes of FRPA s.2.36 (1), a FOP must:

1. Specify the forest operations area (FOA)<sup>1</sup>;
2. Include requirements<sup>2</sup> for forest practices, silviculture systems, and stocking standards relevant to the FOA; and
3. Satisfy all additional requirements prescribed in the FPPR.

To comply with the second bullet above, the FOP may incorporate the applicable FLP's planning guideline requirements by reference, according to FRPA s.2.36 (4). All such requirements become part of the FOP as it appears in the guideline on the date the FOP is approved or amended. See *FRPA Administration Bulletins 19 & 20 on Engaging with First Nations and Public Review and Comment* detailing expectations on engaging on planning guidelines.

The full text of planning guidelines must be shared during engagement with Indigenous nations, as required under FPPR s.4.25. It must also be included in the FOP information notice that accompanies the full plan/amendment made publicly available (FPPR s.4.31).

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<sup>1</sup> Specifying the FOA requires the inclusion of a brief descriptive statement of the area, accompanied by a map that clearly delineates the FOA boundaries (see section below on *Preparing a FOP Map*).

<sup>2</sup> Under FPPR s.4.02, a "FOP requirement" includes any of the following: planning guideline requirement, substitute requirement, a practice requirement under Part 4 of the FPPR from which the holder of the FOP is not exempt, or an additional measure (see section below on *Other FOP Requirements*).

While the FOP is not required to reproduce the full text of the planning guidelines, it must incorporate them by reference under FRPA ss.2.36 (4) and (5), unless an inconsistency is proposed.

## **2.2 Information Requirements for a FOP**

Under FPPR s.4.03, a person who submits or holds a FOP must include all informational/spatial requirements found in Part 1.1, Division 2 (*Information requirements*) of the FPPR, before submitting for approval. This includes details about business contact information, identification numbers, key dates and timelines, lists of cutblocks and roads, assessments and, if applicable, stocking standards. A complete list of required information is included below.

### **2.21 Business Contact Information (FPPR s.4.04)**

The FOP holder must provide business contact information to ensure transparency. This information must include the name of the person, corporation, partnership or party, as well as the personal or legal representatives who are or will be the holder of the FOP, as defined in section 29 of the *Interpretation Act* (i.e. FOP holder). FOP holders must also provide their physical address in B.C. (excluding post office boxes), regular business hours, an email address, and a website address, if applicable. If there are multiple FOP holders, each holder must provide their contact information. Updates to contact details, other than changes to the holder's name, do not require ministerial approval or engagement with First Nations or the public.

### **2.22 Identification Number and Amendment Number (FPPR s.4.05)**

The FOP holder(s) must assign themselves a unique name, number or code to their FOP to ensure that members of the public, First Nations, and government staff can clearly identify the specific plan. The FOP must also indicate, in sequence, the number of times it has been amended for both amendments requiring approval and amendments not requiring approval which must be linked to the unique identifier. When submitting an amendment, best practice is to submit the full FOP, not only the amended sections, and clearly identify the portions of the plan that have been changed.

### **2.23 Date of Approval (FPPR s.4.06)**

The FOP or amendment must display the date the plan or amendment was submitted to the SDM for approval. Once approved, the FOP must be updated to include the date on which the plan or amendment was approved. This update does not require an amendment process, nor First Nations engagement or public review.

## 2.24 Term and Expiry of FOP (FPPR s.4.07)

The FOP holder must display the term of the plan and the expiry date on the FOP once the plan or amendment is approved. Updating the FOP with this information does not require an amendment process, nor First Nations engagement or public review.

## 2.25 Date of Extension (FPPR s.4.08)

When an FOP term is extended under FRPA s.2.43 (*Extension of term of FOP*) the FOP holder must amend the plan to display the date on which the minister extended the term and the new expiry date. This update does not require an amendment process, nor First Nations engagement or public review.

## 2.26 Forest Region and Forest District (FPPR s.4.09)

The FOP holder must identify in their plan the forest districts and forest regions, as defined under the *Forest Act*, in which the FOA is located.

## 2.27 Cutblocks and Roads (FPPR s.4.11)

FOP holders must include a written list of proposed and existing cutblocks and roads, with proposed cutblocks and roads being defined in section 2.2 of FRPA and existing cutblocks and roads being defined in FPPR s.4.02. The list must:

- Include existing<sup>3</sup> cutblocks and roads that are authorized or have been harvested/constructed by the FOP holder. Agreement holders are encouraged to ensure that the written list is consistent with the existing cutblocks and roads shown on the map;
- Include proposed cutblocks and roads for which the holder is applying;
- Assign a unique identifier matching the FOP map for each proposed cutblock and proposed road. Agreement holders and TSMs are encouraged to list the proposed year of deactivation, if any, in this list. If there are multiple openings within a cutblock there should be a single unique identifier applied to all of the openings; and
- Identify the agreement holder responsible for each cutblock and road when multiple holders are involved.

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<sup>3</sup> All existing cutblocks or roads that wholly or partly overlap with the proposed FOP must be included.

**Existing cutblock** means a cutblock that the holder of a FOP is authorized to harvest timber or has already harvested timber under an agreement – FPPR s.4.02

**Existing road** means a road that the holder of a FOP is authorized to construct or has already constructed under a CP or RP – FPPR s.4.02

## 2.28 Commencement Dates (FPPR s.4.12)

Each proposed cutblock or road must include the year in which the FOP holder proposes to begin harvesting the cutblock or constructing the road. These dates are for informational purposes and do not need to be updated if plans change.

## 2.29 Assessments (FPPR s.4.13)

If the planning guidelines in the applicable FLP require an assessment to be conducted before an FOP or amendment is submitted for approval, a copy of the assessment (e.g., watershed, visual impact) must be submitted to the minister together with the FOP. Only assessments explicitly identified in the FLP as required to be completed prior to FOP submission must be included. Other post-FOP approval assessments must still be completed as required by FOP requirements- see below.

**Note:** Publishing notice of site level plan availability must be provided on a publicly accessible website and made publicly available upon request (FPPR s.4.58 or upon request by the SDM in accordance with the *Forest Act* Part 3.1 and 8).

## 2.30 Stocking Standards in a FOP (FPPR s.4.14)

It is expected that FLPs include planning guidelines establishing stocking standards for each biogeoclimatic site series within the FLA. FOP holders may reference and follow these guidelines or propose substitute requirements – see *FRPA Administration Bulletin 18 Inconsistent Planning Requirements*.

Where an FLP does not include a planning guideline for stocking standards, or where the guideline does not apply to the area proposed under the FOP, then s.4.14 (*Specifying stocking standards in FOP*) of the FPPR applies. This creates the same stocking standard content requirements found in FPPR ss.44 (1) and 45 that applies for FSPs.

In such cases, agreement holders must specify stocking standards in their FOP as per FPPR s.4.14 as an additional measure. This must include:

- Regeneration date - when planting or natural regeneration is expected to begin,
- Stocking standards - tree density, species composition, spacing targets, free-growing height and date, and expected tree growth milestones.

The sufficiency of stocking standards proposed as an additional measure are considered as part of the SDM's decision to approve a FOP, and that decision is guided by the criteria set out in FPPR s.4.39 (*Criteria for minister's approval of a FOP*). In developing proposed stocking standards, agreement holders are encouraged to be mindful of what the SDM will consider under FPPR s.4.39 in approving a FOP. The agreement holder should look to existing regionally appropriate stocking standards where they exist.

**Note:** FPPR s.26 (*Minister's consideration of stocking standards*) does not legally apply to the assessment of stocking standards under a FOP. However, agreement holders and TSMs, when preparing their stocking standards, are encouraged to utilize the criteria listed in s.26 as a basis for the development of their stocking standards.

**Table 1. Summary of Stocking Standard Scenarios**

Scenarios		Response
A.	FLP includes stocking standards for the relevant area in the FOP	Reference planning guidelines - FOP holders to reference and follow FLP relevant guideline(s) on stocking standards
B.	FLP includes stocking standards for the relevant area in the FOP, but adherence is impracticable or the agreement holder proposes an alternative stocking standard	Substitute requirement - to be proposed by the FOP holder and included in the FOP
C.	FLP does not include a stocking standard, or the stocking standard does not apply to the relevant area in the FOP	Additional measures - to be proposed by the FOP holder and included in the FOP

### 2.31 FOP Must be Signed (FPPR s.4.62)

The FOP or amendment must be signed by each person (as defined in the *Forest Act*) and by each qualified professional acting on behalf of the holder. Each signature must include the printed name, the signature itself, and the date of signing.

### 2.3 Other FOP Requirements

In addition to the information requirements described above, the FOP may include other types of FOP requirements. These include planning guidelines incorporated from the applicable FLP, substitute requirements, practice requirements (FPPR Part 4) and/or additional measures. These requirements are determined based on the applicable FLP, regulatory guidance, and operational context. The criteria for minister's approval under FPPR s.4.39 apply to all FOP requirements, except practice requirements.

Where a FOP includes a substitute requirement or additional measure, the FOP should clearly describe how these will achieve, or make progress toward achieving, the related

FLP outcomes and objectives, and must demonstrate measurability, verifiability, and conformity with FRPA s.2.4 and FPPR s.4.39 (a).

FOP requirements form the foundation of FOP content and should be addressed as follows:

- **Planning Guideline Requirements:** Derived directly from the applicable FLP. The FOP must explicitly reference the applicable planning guidelines from the FLP – FRPA ss.2.36 (4) and (5).
- **Substituted Requirements:** May be proposed by an agreement holder. The FOP submission package must include an *inconsistency rationale* demonstrating a clear and reasoned justification for the proposed deviation from the FLP, including the nature of the inconsistency, the reasons it is necessary, and/or why adherence to the planning guideline is impracticable in the given context. See *FRPA Administration Bulletin 18 – Inconsistent Planning Requirements* for further guidance.
- **Practice Requirements:** If the agreement holder intends to follow one or more practice requirements, as set out in Part 4 of the FPPR, it is best practice to copy the full wording of the practice requirement directly into their FOP. This may occur where, for example, the FLP does not include a planning guideline for one or more of the matters listed under FPPR s.4.51 and no additional measure is proposed, or where the FLP has indicated that FOP holders are to follow the practice requirement.

**Note:** If a planning guideline referenced in an FOP exists for a matter under FPPR s.4.51 which is at least as effective as the FPPR management standard, the agreement holder may, at the discretion of the SDM, be exempt from the practice requirement at the same time as the FOP decision.

- **Additional Measures:** Where no planning guidelines or practice requirements exist for a specific FLP outcome (e.g. invasive species), and the FOP does not already include additional measures to address that outcome, the SDM may determine that the FOP is insufficient when considering the factors set out under FPPR s.4.39 [*Criteria for minister's approval of forest operations plan*]. Additional measures create a legal obligation for the agreement holder or TSM once approved in a FOP. They must:
  - Be measurable or verifiable,
  - Align with the SDM's approval criteria under FPPR s.4.39 (the SDM may choose not to approve a FOP if these criteria are not met), and
  - Explain how the measure contributes to achieving, or makes progress toward, FLP objectives.

**Note:** Additional measures may be initiated by either the SDM or the agreement holder. For example, a District Manager may set an expectation that an additional measure be developed where no FLP planning guideline exists. Alternatively, an agreement holder may voluntarily propose an additional measure in their FOP as a best practice.

### **3.0 Preparing a FOP Map**

FOP maps will be used by agreement holders and TSMs to communicate proposed forestry activities. These maps will be made available to First Nations and the public for their review and input of proposed forest development. Natural resource district staff and SDMs will use this mapping information during the review and approval of a FOP and subsequently the issuance of cutting and/or road permits (CP/RP). The following section outlines legislated FOP map requirements and procedural expectations under FRPA and the FPPR.

#### **3.1 Mapping Expectations**

Under FRPA s.2.36 (2), the FOP map must demonstrate alignment with any expectations specified by the minister regarding the scale and form of a FOP map. These expectations must be considered by agreement holders and TSMs in the development of their operational plans.

Examples of mapping expectations:

- 1:20,000 (Coast) and 1:50,000 (Interior), with larger scales for portions of the FOA; or
- Spatial layers can be toggled on and off to manage the extensive requirements.

It is recommended agreement holders seek out and incorporate any guidance provided by the applicable SDM(s).

#### **3.2 Map Requirements for a FOP**

Under FRPA s.2.36 (2), a FOP must include a map which meets the applicable requirements as set out in this provision. Also, FPPR s.4.25 requires the map to comply with the mapping requirements in FPPR Part 1.1, Division 3 (*Mapping requirements*) before the plan is submitted for approval. A complete list of the required information is included below.

Agreement holders can access the spatial data needed to prepare their FOP map through the online [Data Catalogue](#) or by contacting the local natural resource district office.

##### **3.21 Landscape Features (FPPR s.4.16)**

Water features such as streams, rivers, wetlands, and lakes are shown to ensure proper management and conservation. Elevation and relief must also be displayed.

### 3.22 Agreement Boundaries, Land Use Objectives and Areas of Other Land Use (FPPR s.4.17)

FOP maps must show boundaries of various land use areas to support forest practitioners in planning forestry activities and provide SDMs with the information they need to make informed decisions. This includes identifying boundaries of each area subject to an agreement under the *Forest Act* held by a person who is or will be a holder of the FOP, areas subject to an order under s.93.4 or s.93.8 of the *Land Act*. Other boundaries that need to be shown include parks, private land, municipalities, regional districts, agreements under the *Forest Act*, agreements under the *Range Act*, and other areas of land use.

### 3.23 Areas Subject to Harvesting Constraints (FPPR s.4.18)

The FOP map must show the boundaries and approximate location of the following 14 areas:

- Areas where timber harvesting is restricted or prohibited under the applicable FLP;
- Forested areas that the minister has determined as being damaged by insects, diseases, animals, or abiotic factors (FRPA s.26);
- An area designated as a forest health emergency management area (FRPA s.27);
- Areas established by order as an interpretive forest site, recreation site, recreation trails or trail-based recreation area (FRPA s.56);
- Areas subject to orders for the protection of recreation and range resources (FRPA s.58);
- Areas designated as areas of catastrophic damage (FRPA s.108.2);
- Grandparented areas established or continued under the Forest Practices Code (FRPA s.180);
- Grandparented general wildlife measure continued under FRPA s.182;
- An area subject to an order under s.7 of the *Environmental and Land Use Act*;
- An area subject to a Part 13 (*Designated Areas*) or Part 15 (*Special Purpose Areas*) designation under the *Forest Act*;
- Areas subject to orders under the Government Actions Regulation ([GAR](#))<sup>4</sup>;
- A watershed, stream, aquifer or other specified area or environmental feature subject to a water objective established under s.43 (*Water Objective*) of the *Water Sustainability Act* (WSA);
- Area subject to an order that designates an area for planning processes under the *Water Sustainability Act* (WSA s.65); and

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<sup>4</sup> This requirement applies only to GAR orders with defined spatial boundaries. GAR orders that are descriptive or non-spatial are not required to be mapped on the FOP.

- An area designated under s.4 of the *Wildlife Act* as a wildlife management area.

### 3.24 Proposed and Existing Cutblocks Information (FRPA ss.2.36 (2) & 4.19)

Under FRPA ss.2.36 (2) (a), (c) & (e), the FOP map must show:

- The approximate location of each proposed cutblock;
- The location of each existing cutblock within 5 km of a proposed cutblock boundary where the FOP holder has harvested or started harvesting timber; and
- The location of each area that is subject to a CP that is held by the agreement holder.

#### **Specific Mapping Requirements:**

- Each proposed cutblock must indicate the year harvesting is proposed to begin;
- Each proposed cutblock must be assigned a unique identifier that corresponds to the identifier used in the FOP document;
- If the FOP is or will be held by more than one person, the map must identify which person holds or proposes to hold a CP for each existing cutblock and proposed cutblock;
- The map must show the location of each existing cutblock within 5 km of a proposed cutblock, including those cutblocks harvested by *persons other than the holder of the FOP*; and
- Existing cutblocks harvested more than 20 years before the FOP submission date do not need to be shown.

#### **Additional Timber Sales Manager (TSM) Mapping Requirements:**

- Indicate the year the TSM intends to invite applications for each Timber Sale Licence (TSL) shown on the map; and
- Show the location of each existing cutblock within 5 km of a proposed cutblock that the TSM intends to include in the TSL during the term of the FOP.

### 3.25 Proposed and Existing Road Information (FRPA s.2.36 (2) & FPPR ss.4.21, 4.22, 4.23)

Under FRPA s.2.36 (2) (b), (d), & (e), the FOP map must show:

- The approximate location of each proposed road;
- The location of each existing road that is continuous to or within 5 km of a proposed road, where the FOP holder has constructed or is authorized to construct a road; and
- The location of the agreement holder's RPs.

#### **Specific mapping requirements:**

- Indicate the year in which road construction and deactivation are planned;
- Each proposed road must be assigned a unique identifier that corresponds to the identifier used in the FOP document;
- Roads included in a previously approved FOP or FSP held by the FOP holder that have not yet been constructed must also be shown;
- If the FOP is, or will be, held by more than one person, each proposed or existing road must clearly indicate which person who holds/will hold the associated RP;
- All existing roads within 5 km of the centerline of a proposed road must be shown, including any road that has been constructed or is authorized to be constructed by the FOP holder or others;
  - Existing roads include:
    - a road constructed by, or is authorized to be constructed by, *persons other than the holder of the FOP*;
    - a forest service road;
    - a forest resource road;
    - roads excluded under FRPA s.21.2 (2) from the definition of “forest resource road”; and
    - roads that have been constructed by the holder under a cutting permit or road permit or that is authorized under a cutting permit or road permit held by the agreement holder(s);
- For each existing road, the map must show whether it will be temporary or permanent, the year proposed for deactivation, and the level of deactivation; and
- The map must show any road subject to an order under FRPA s.23.2 (*Order to deactivate road*).

**Additional TSM Mapping Requirements:**

- Show the approximate location of each proposed road the TSM plans to construct during the term of the FOP;
- Show the location of each existing road that has been constructed to provide access to an area subject to a TSL; and
- Show the location of each existing road that is continuous to or within 5 km of the centerline of a proposed road that the TSM intends to construct for the term of the FOP.

## 4.0 Resources and Contact

### 4.1 Legislative Links

- *Forest Act* [Forest Act \(gov.bc.ca\)](http://gov.bc.ca)
- *Forest and Range Practices Act* [Forest and Range Practices Act \(gov.bc.ca\)](http://gov.bc.ca)
- Forest Planning and Practices Regulation [Forest Planning and Practices Regulation \(gov.bc.ca\)](http://gov.bc.ca)

### 4.2 Resource Links

- Forest Operations Plan - [Forest Operations Plan - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](http://gov.bc.ca)
- Forest Landscape Plan - [Forest landscape plans - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](http://gov.bc.ca)
- Forest Professional BC's - [Guidance for Managing Non-Statutory Expectations in Forest Practices \(2009\)](http://gov.bc.ca).
- More on FPBC's Non-Statutory Expectations - [Applying the Obligation to Weigh and Balance in Professional Service](http://gov.bc.ca)

### 4.3 List of Acronyms

<b>Acronyms</b>	<b>Full Name</b>
FLA	Forest Landscape Area
FLP	Forest Landscape Plan
FOA	Forest Operations Area
FOP	Forest Operations Plan
FPPR	Forest Planning and Practices Regulation
FRPA	<i>Forest and Range Practices Act</i>
FSP	Forest Stewardship Plan

### 4.4 Contact

If there are any questions about the content of this bulletin, please contact the Forest Science Planning and Practices Branch: [frpa.support@gov.bc.ca](mailto:frpa.support@gov.bc.ca)

For more FRPA Bulletins topics, visit:

[Forest and Range Practices Act implementation tools - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](http://gov.bc.ca)