



Forest Operations Plans – Public Review and Comment

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1.0 Introduction

This bulletin provides guidance on the legislated requirements, expectations, and roles and responsibilities related to public engagement for forest operations plans (FOPs). It is intended for forest professionals, government staff, and statutory decision makers (SDMs) involved in the preparation, submission or review of FOPs. It provides guidance on the public review and comment process and outlines the roles of both rights-holders and the public.

Recent amendments to the *Forest and Range Practices Act* (FRPA) introduced the Forest Landscape Plan (FLP) framework, shifting forest management to the broader, landscape-level. FLPs are prepared by the Province in consultation and cooperation with First Nations, in collaboration with holders of agreements under the *Forest Act* and local communities, and with input from local stakeholders. Once established, an FLP sets clear direction for forest development within the plan area.

FOPs are required in areas where an FLP has been established and for applicable agreement holders under the *Forest Act*, including Timber Sales Managers (TSM). As part of the FOP development process, those preparing the FOP or amendment must follow the legislated procedures for public review and comment, including defined timelines, opportunities for input, and notice and reporting requirements on comments received.

This bulletin focuses on public review and comment requirements. Guidance on engagement with First Nations is provided in the *FRPA Administration Bulletin 19 - Engaging with First Nations*.

2.0 Public Input in Forest Operations Planning

Public input is a key component of forest management on Crown land. It helps identify public interests and values early in the planning process, and supports:

- Inclusive and informed planning and decision-making;
- Improved communication and relationships among agreement holders, rights-holders, and communities;
- Recognition of differing perspectives on the land-base;
- Greater transparency and public trust; and
- Conflict resolution through collaborative problem-solving.

FRPA and its regulations set out specific requirements for public review and engagement of proposed FOPs and amendments. Experience from past public review and comment opportunities indicate a wide range of interests and perspectives. Common topics raised have included harvesting methods and silvicultural systems (e.g., clearcutting vs. selective harvesting), visual and ecological impacts, forest resilience, recreation and tourism values, wildlife habitat, and broader social and economic implications for local communities.

2.1 Rights-Holders under FRPA

When preparing a FOP or amendment, it is important to recognize that multiple rights-holders may be present in the proposed plan area. Rights-holders may hold legally established rights that go beyond public interests. Under FPPR s.4.36 (1) [*Review and comment by rights-holders*], agreement holders and TSMs must give notice¹ to persons whose rights are likely to be affected by the FOP or amendment. The agreement holder or TSM is responsible for identifying applicable rights-holders.

Examples of rights-holders may include:

- Other agreement holders;
- Holders of water licenses or short-term water use authorization holders;
- Local governments (e.g., municipal);
- Recreational tenure holders;
- Mineral rights-holders;
- Guide Outfitters and Trapline registration holders; or
- Private landowners.

Ministry staff may assist agreement holders by providing available contact information for individuals or groups with legal interests in the area. However, agreement holders are responsible for ensuring that the contact list is complete and inclusive; any information provided by staff should not be considered exhaustive.

3.0 Roles and Responsibilities

Under s.2.38 (b) of FRPA, agreement holders and TSMs must carry out public review and comment in accordance with the requirements and procedures set out in the Act and its regulations. Agreement holders and TSMs should consider using a range of communication methods such as websites, newspapers, and public forums to ensure affected persons are informed and able to participate.

Rights-holders and members of the public are encouraged to actively take part in the public review and comment process. While agreement holders or TSMs lead the process, collaboration supports the development of FOPs that better reflect local interests and values. The public review period is an opportunity for commenters to share concerns, offer support and provide input on proposed FOP content. For a summary of the roles and responsibilities, see Table 1.

¹ The requirement **to give notice** to a rights-holder takes its meaning from FRPA s.110 [*How to notice may be given*]. It is the expectation that the agreement holder provide the same information to the rights-holder as shared with the public under FPPR s.4.33 (3) – see below.

Table 1: Roles and responsibilities for agreement holders and commenters

Responsibilities for Agreement Holders and TSMs	Engagement Opportunities for Commenters ²
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide notice of the opportunity for public review and comment on a FOP or amendment. This notice must be published on a publicly accessible website and in a newspaper or the BC Gazette (FPPR s.4.33). • This notice must also include the review and comment period, and should include basic agreement holder or TSM and plan/amendment information, and a web address for submitting comments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The public are encouraged to actively participate in the public review and comment process. • Acknowledge the review and comment timelines detailed in the notice.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide specific notice(s) to those whose rights are likely to be affected (FPPR s.4.36 (1)). The notice should include the same information listed above. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rights-holders should consider self-identifying early for more effective inclusivity. • Acknowledge the review and comment timelines detailed in the notice.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When making a FOP or amendment publicly available for review and comment, include a FOP information notice (FPPR s.4.31). This notice must be available as a digital copy and as a paper copy at place of business along with the notice of review and comment. • Include the required notice information under FPPR s.4.31. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commenters should review the proposed FOP or amendment information and consider how proposed operations may affect certain interests, values, or land uses. • Submit specific concerns or other feedback within the review and comment period.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider using additional mediums (e.g., summaries, infographics, or other media) to more effectively communicate the content of the proposed FOP or amendment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commenters are encouraged to ask questions or request clarification from agreement holders or TSMs to better understand the proposed FOP or amendment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review any comments received and revise the proposed FOP or amendment as considered appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider providing contact information to support continued dialogue.

² **Commenter** broadly refers to a member of the public and or a rights-holder.

4.0 Notice Requirements

There are two types of notice requirements as part of making a FOP or amendment publicly available for review and comment, both of which are the responsibility of the agreement holder or TSM. These include:

- **Notice of Review and Comment** (FPPR s.4.33 (3)) – notifies the public or rights-holders of the opportunity to review and comment on a FOP or amendment. This is a brief notice, and includes the review and comment period, basic information about the agreement holder or TSM, the identifying information of the plan/amendment (name/code of plan, location of plan area), and a web address where the full FOP or amendment can be accessed.
- **FOP Information Notice** (FPPR s.4.31) – provides detailed information on the FOP or amendment and accompanies the full plan/amendment that is made publicly available. This notice is lengthier than the former, and must include all information required by regulation, including the review and comment period, contact details for all signatories, and clear instructions for accessing a digital copy of the FOP, including a website address.

During the engagement period, the FOP or amendment and applicable notices must remain accessible to the public. The *FOP information notice* must be updated promptly in accordance with the regulations if any updates are made to the initial information shared, engagement period or access details.

Before submitting a FOP or amendment for approval, the following notice requirements must be met:

- **Online publication** - the *notice of review and comment* must be published on a publicly accessible website maintained by, or on behalf of, the agreement holder or TSM (FPPR s.4.33 (3)).
- **Advertisement** – the *notice of review and comment* must also be published in either:
 - a newspaper published in BC and circulating in the area(s) where the FOP or amendment is proposed, or
 - the BC Gazette.
- **Accessibility** – the FOP or amendment, together with the *FOP information notice*, must be available as both a paper copy at the person’s place of business and as a digital copy (FPPR s.4.32).

As noted earlier in this bulletin, agreement holders and TSMs must also provide specific notice of review and comment to any rights-holders likely to be affected by a proposed FOP or amendment.

4.1 Additional Advertising Considerations

While the preceding steps meet the minimum legal requirements, agreement holders and TSMs are encouraged, where appropriate, to go beyond them to enhance accessibility and engagement. When preparing and publishing the notice, consider the following:

- Has the intent of review and comment been achieved?
- Were the most effective communication mediums selected based on the local context and target audiences?
- Is the notice accessible to a wide range of demographics and geographic locations?
- Could the review and comment period notice be published more than once to reach those with limited or no internet access?
- In areas without active newspaper circulation, would publication of the review and comment period notice through alternative channels or mediums be more effective?
- Are there opportunities to enhance engagement through public messaging boards, social media, open house sessions, or town hall presentations?

These considerations can help ensure broader awareness and support more inclusive participation in the planning process.

4.2 Posting on a Publicly Accessible Website

Publishing a review and comment notice as required under FPPR s.4.33 on a publicly accessible website is the responsibility of the agreement holder or TSM in accordance with the following criteria:

- The website is maintained by or on behalf of the agreement holder submitting the FOP or amendment (e.g., a company website), and
- Access to the website is not restricted by user registration, subscription or paywall.

This is in addition to requirements to publish the review and comment notice in either a newspaper or the BC Gazette (FPPR s.4.33 (3)).

5.0 Duration of Public Review and Comment

Under FPPR s.4.33, a FOP or amendment requiring approval must be available for public review and commenting for a period of 60 days, unless a shorter period is authorized by an SDM. The SDM may exercise discretion to shorten the review period to *no fewer than 10 days* in situations where the 60-day public review and comment period would likely result in unacceptable impacts to proper management and conservation of forests or forest ecosystems, increased risk of wildfire, or increased risk to public safety.

For FOP amendments that do not require approval, a 30-day period for public review and commenting is required, which may also be shortened to a minimum of 10 days by the SDM (FPPR s.4.34), using the same criteria outlined above.

5.1 Extensions for Rights-Holders

If a rights-holder requires more time to review and comment on a proposed FOP or amendment, they may request an extension of the review and comment period. The agreement holder or TSM must provide an extension *up to a maximum* total review and comment period of 60 days (FPPR s.4.36 (2)). If a rights-holder is making an extension request, they are encouraged to reach out to the agreement holder or TSM as early as possible. This extension period would be in addition to, and continuous of, the initial review and comment period determined under FPPR ss. 4.33 or 4.34. Extensions are ineligible where the minister has authorized a shorter public review and comment period.

5.2 Exemptions from Public Review and Comment Requirements

There are no exemptions from the requirement to conduct public review and comment on a FOP or amendment. However, as noted above, the SDM may, under specific regulatory circumstances, shorten the review period.

6.0 Other Considerations

6.1 Providing Assessments Upon Request

Agreement holders now have a greater responsibility in balancing forestry activities with public expectations. Where an FLP planning guideline requires an assessment to be conducted before an FOP or an amendment is submitted to the minister for approval, a copy of the assessment must be provided to any individual who requests it, in a manner that is reasonable, in accordance with FPPR s.4.35.

7.0 Summary of Review and Comment

Agreement holders and TSMs must prepare and submit an “engagement summary” to the SDM as part of the FOP or amendment submission package. This summary must document how public review and comment was conducted, including comments received by rights-holders. Under FRPA s.2.38 (2)(b) and FPPR 4.37, this summary must include the following:

7.1 Details of Engagement Activities

- A copy of the *FOP information notice* under FPPR s.4.31, and
- A copy of the version of the FOP or amendment that was made available during the review period,
- The duration of the public review and comment period(s), and
- A list of all notices³, correspondence, meetings, or other engagement activities conducted during the period.

³ Includes a copy of the notice required under FRPA s.4.33(3) and a copy of the (generic) notice provided to rights holders as required under FPPR 4.36 [*Review and comment by rights-holders*].

7.2 Summary of Feedback and Considerations

- A summary of comments received from the public and rights-holders⁴, and
- A description of any changes made to the FOP or amendment because of those comments, and
- A description of matters raised or changes proposed that were *not* addressed through changes to the FOP or amendment.

This summary supports transparency in the decision-making process and ensures that requirements for engagement and public review have been completed.

7.3 Confidentiality of Comments

Public engagement records, including the engagement summary, are subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIPPA). If a request for access to information is made, the government may release the engagement summary, submitted comments, and associated maps or planning materials (subject to any requirements to redact any information).

⁴ Agreement holders and TSMs are encouraged to differentiate between comments received by the public and those received by rights-holders for greater transparency.

8.0 Resources and Contact

8.1 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)

8.2 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 \)](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)

8.3 List of Acronyms

Acronyms	Full Name
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

8.4 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

For more FRPA Bulletins topics, visit:

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