



**Species of Management Concern &
At-Risk Ecological Communities
Standard Operating Procedure**
Chinook Business Area
2023-11-14

INTRODUCTION

This Species of Management Concern (SOMC) and At-Risk Ecological Communities (AREC) Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is intended to provide guidance to all BCTS Chinook staff, contractors, licensees, and permittees. BCTS is committed to managing Species at Risk identified through federal and provincial legislation, as well as to meet Sustainable Forest Management certification requirements. Additionally, some species and species habitat features do not have legal requirements but are still recognized by BCTS as needing additional management guidance. **Collectively, these species & habitats are referred to as SOMC.** The corporate framework on the development of SOMC programs is outlined in the provincial [BCTS SOMC Guide](#)

(https://intranet.gov.bc.ca/assets/intranet/flnrord/bcts/tos/sustainability/somc/somc_program_guide.pdf). AREC are currently included as part of the SOMC program as defined above, but have unique field confirmation procedures and implementation guides, available on the Provincial AREC website (<https://intranet.gov.bc.ca/for/bcts/sustainability/sustainability/at-risk-ecological-communities>)

SCOPE

This SOP covers all aspects of forestry planning, block and road development, and silviculture. It includes and applies to relevant Business Area (BA) staff, licensees, and contractors working for BCTS Chinook. This SOP applies to the BCTS Chinook Focus List. It was developed through the corporate program using the methodology outlined in the provincial BCTS SOMC Guide. This SOP is applicable to all BCTS Chinook operations, and all land tenure in which BCTS Chinook operates as a forest land management partner with 3rd party entities, e.g., community forests, disposition agreements, etc. (if timber is to be sold as SFI certified, then this and other aspects of the SFI Certification program must be applied).

Some BCTS Chinook SOMC processes are outside the scope of this SOP, including approved and proposed Ungulate Winter Range and Wildlife Habitat Area layers and their General Wildlife Measures, Northern Goshawk breeding territories, Marbled Murrelet habitat areas, etc. These are managed through local Forest Stewardship Plans.

OBJECTIVES

1. Define the various steps and procedures that are required to occur at different operational stages to effectively manage and protect SOMC
2. Identify who have the responsibility to complete the procedures outlined in this SOP
3. Meet legal and Sustainable Forestry Management certification obligations
4. Educate BCTS staff, contractors, licensees, and permittees in the identification, and management of SOMC
5. Meet applicable Land Use Plans and Order commitments (e.g. the *Great Bear Rainforest Order* or the *Haida Gwaii Land Use Objective Order*)



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STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

1. SOMC Program Maintenance	
Procedure	Responsibility
Annually check the corporate SOMC intranet site (https://intranet.gov.bc.ca/for/bcts/sustainability/sustainability/species-of-management-concern) for updates to the materials. Ensure the current version of these products are used. Complete updates as necessary before training and distribution of SOMC materials.	Planning Officer
2. TRAINING and AWARENESS	
Procedure	Responsibility
Conduct an SOMC & AREC awareness training session for BCTS staff and multi-phase contractors. Training is to be completed at a recommended frequency of at least every two years, unless major updates occur between training years; attendance must be recorded. At a minimum, training content should include background on legal and certification requirements related to SOMC as well as a review of the local Focus List species and available resources.	Planning Officer
Provide all BCTS field staff and multi-phase contractors with training materials, applicable SOPs/Best Management Practices and reference materials (e.g. field cards) to be used for species recognition and management in the field.	Planning Officer
Timber Sale Licence (TSL) holder awareness training will occur at pre-work meetings as described in Section 4.	BCTS Staff (e.g. conformance technicians, operations technician)
3. PLANNING	
Procedure	Responsibility
During long-term or higher-level planning processes (e.g., 5-year plans, annual operations plans, etc.), identify any overlapping known occurrences of AREC or SOMC or their habitat. Resources to complete this process: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Review the BC Conservation Data Center (CDC) species at risk mapping to identify any known occurrences of SOMC & AREC from the focus list · Any local wildlife related BCTS data bases (e.g., BCTS layout point features layer) If occurrences are identified, understand and plan for the management implications.	Practices Forester, Planning Forester
Prior to starting any block or road layout works, identify any known occurrences of AREC or SOMC or their habitat, as part of the Planning-to-Operations Handover (release) process. Resources to complete this process:	Operations Technician/Multiphase contract manager



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the BC CDC species at risk mapping to identify any known occurrences of SOMC & AREC from the focus list Any local wildlife related BCTS data bases (e.g., BCTS layout point features layer) <p>If occurrences are identified, discuss the management implications with the contractor.</p>	
<p>Check if the development overlaps with any of the AREC focus list Biogeoclimatic Ecological Classification (BEC) site series associations. If yes, follow:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AREC Field Confirmation Procedures & AREC Field Cards by Natural Disturbance Types (NDT) AREC Management Guidance 	<p align="center">Planning Forester</p>
	<p align="center">N/A</p>

4. PRE-WORKS	
Procedure	Responsibility
<p>For TSLs -- Review the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SOMC operator awareness sheet Wildlife features in the vicinity of the planned activities BCTS' plan to manage any known features including timing restrictions or any other requirements for the TSL, as well as any relevant results and strategies in the Forest Stewardship Plan (FSP) Reporting procedure if a species occurrence is identified (Section 7.) 	<p align="center">TSL Coordinator/ Operations Technician</p>
<p>For planning and development contracts (e.g., cutblock and road layout, multi-phase, road construction, etc.) -- Review the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus List Known wildlife features in the vicinity of the planned activities Management strategies to be considered (from legal orders, FSP, BA SOP's, etc.) Reporting procedure if a species occurrence is identified (Section 7.) 	<p align="center">Multiphase contract manager/ Operations Technician; Engineering Officers/Technicians</p>

5. FIELD ASSESSMENT & MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES	
Procedure	Responsibility
<p>Everyone working in the field has a responsibility to observe and report SOMC & AREC. It is encouraged that multi-phase contractors dedicate field time to this task, to avoid limiting our program to incidental observations.</p>	<p align="center">BCTS Staff and Multiphase Contractors</p>
<p>If a SOMC, AREC, or SOMC habitat feature is identified or suspected in the field:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> notify BCTS immediately, if required, engage a qualified registered professional to confirm identification of a species or status of a habitat feature, 	<p align="center">BCTS Staff and Contractors</p>



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> follow the Field Action protocol on the Field Card, or best management guidance, see AREC Field Confirmation Procedures and AREC management guidance and record relevant information, take photos and document the location, follow Section 7. 	
Once a SOMC is identified, develop a site-specific management plan using any additional supplemental species information, such as local BMPs or SOPs and/or by consulting a qualified registered professional. See AREC management guidance .	BCTS Staff and Contractors
Address the SOMC assessment findings and associated management strategies and requirements in both the Road and Block Site Plans, and their associated support documents. Areas to be protected from harvest must be excluded from the harvest area exhibit A, because WTRA's can be moved by the TSL holder. <i>Note: As Site Plans are not legal plans, any requirements to manage SOMC must be contained within the TSL document. It is best practice to include SOMC management requirements in the FSP where possible/applicable.</i>	BCTS Staff and Contractors
Identify the location of known SOMC/AREC occurrences of SOMC on the Site Plan, Road Construction and Harvest Plan maps. Identify any areas of concern or timing restrictions relating to the management of the identified features, including any species-specific or site-specific management requirements, if applicable.	BCTS Staff and Contractors
Submit the spatial location of the identified AERC, SOMC, or SOMC habitat feature to BCTS as a BCTS layout features point, as per the "Digital Submission Standards – User Guide", including all any BC Conservation Data Centre reporting data.	BCTS Staff and Contractors

6. FOREST OPERATIONS (HARVEST, ROAD BUILDING, SILVICULTURE)	
Procedure	Responsibility
Insert any relevant clauses or wording related to timing restrictions or other management requirement associated with the AREC, SOMC, or SOMC habitat feature into the TSL Highlights or other contractual documents. Wording of any such clauses should be reviewed by BCTS Provincial Operations to ensure enforceability.	TSL Coordinator/ Operations Technologist
As part of the Harvest and Roads pre-work process, notify contractors (road construction) and TSL holders (road construction and harvesting) of the location of any known AREC, SOMC, or SOMC habitat features, and any special management requirements associated with the features identified within a development area.	TSL Coordinator/ Operations Technologist
Monitor forest operations to ensure that all applicable management strategies are properly implemented by contractors and TSL holders operating within the	TSL Coordinator/



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BA. Follow the usual inspection and monitoring requirements established under the BA's Environmental Management System.	Operations Technologist
If a previously unidentified AREC, SOMC, or SOMC habitat feature is discovered during the forest operations, stop work and notify BCTS immediately.	Licensee, Contractor
For forest operations under BCTS Contract: If a previously unidentified AREC, SOMC, or SOMC habitat feature is discovered, develop and implement a site-specific management plan for the species using the species supplemental information or by consulting a qualified registered professional. Modify the works contract if/as required to implement the associated protocol.	BCTS Staff/Multi phase Contractor, RPBio, Works Contractor
For forest operations under TSLs: If a previously unidentified AREC, SOMC, or SOMC habitat feature is discovered by the licensee, support as required to create and implement a site-specific management plan for the species or feature. Methods to support could include sharing any relevant BCTS procedures, or providing professional advice to develop a management plan.	BCTS Staff, Licensee
If a previously unidentified AREC, SOMC, or SOMC habitat feature is discovered during harvesting or road construction and the applicable First Nation has requested to be notified, the Planning Forester/Indigenous Relations Liaison must be notified to commence this process.	Practices Forester, Planning Forester
Monitor forest operations (during and at the completion of harvest or road construction) to assess adherence to any AREC/SOMC requirements and ensure that all applicable management strategies are properly implemented by contractors and TSL holders operating within the BA. If any AREC/SOMC requirements were not met, conduct an Environmental Management System (EMS) Incident Investigation ensuring details are documented on the Incident Report Form (CHK-009) and entered into the Land and Resource Manager (LRM) EMS Certification Module. Notify Practices Forester and Certification Standards Officer. If you suspect a potential non-compliance with a legal requirement, C&E must be notified.	Operations Technologist, Practices Forester

7. TRACKING & REPORTING	
Procedure	Responsibility
<p>Complete the <i>Species of Management Concern & At-Risk Ecological Communities Tracking Form</i> at each stage of development: 0. Incidental Observations; 1. Planning; 2. Layout & Development; 3. Final TSL Package; and 4. Silviculture.</p> <p>This form includes reporting procedures to the BC Conservation Data Center as well as to BCTS. BCTS staff are required to file a copy of the form with any accompanying data in the SOMC folder specified on the form.</p>	<p>Multi-phase Contractor, Operations Technologist, Practices Forester, Planning Forester</p>



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7. TRACKING & REPORTING	
Procedure	Responsibility
Maintaining a spatial inventory: BCTS is in progress of developing a consistent inventory system for wildlife data. Until updates are provided, please manage the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Multiphase consultants should submit GPS locations & details of all wildlife features (e.g., bear dens, bird nests, mineral licks, etc.), SOMC, and AREC as a <i>BCTS layout point feature</i>, which must reported and filed as per the Tracking Form · Any observations by BCTS staff should be reported and filed as per the Tracking Form 	Planning Forester, Practices Forester, GIS team
BC CDC Reporting: Contractors are responsible for any required reporting of their observations to the CDC. SOMC/AREC to be reported to the BC CDC include all Red or Blue-listed species and their nests or dens, species included on Schedule 1 of the <i>Species at Risk Act</i> and their nests or dens.	Multi-phase Contractor, Operations Technologist, Practices Forester, Planning Forester
Haida Gwaii only: Complete any additional reporting requirements outlined in specific Land Use Orders (e.g., the Great Bear Rainforest Order or the Haida Gwaii Land Use Objective Order).	Practices Forester, Planning Forester

8. CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT	
Procedure	Responsibility
On an annual basis, review the business processes relating to the BA's SOMC/AREC management and update documents/procedures as required.	Planning Forester, Planning Officer

DEFINITIONS

Species of Management Concern (SOMC): Specific species, ecosystems and habitats that occur within BCTS operating areas and have the potential be adversely affected by forestry activities. SOMC are identified as:

- provincial Red and Blue Listed animals and plants (vascular plants, moss, and lichen) species,
- NatureServe Global G1/G2 species,
- *Species at Risk Act* (SARA), Schedule 1 listed species,
- *Forest and Range Practices Act* (FRPA), *Forest Planning and Practices Regulation* (FPPR) Section 7 (*Government Action Regulation* (GAR)) species,
- species included in the *Identified Wildlife Management Strategy* (IWMS), or
- species identified in the *BC Wildlife Act*.



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At-Risk Ecological Communities (AREC): Ecological communities that have specific attributes that make these ecological community ‘at risk’. AREC must have specific attributes (such as stand age, structure and species composition) as defined in reports that can be located BC Species and Ecosystem Explorer website.

BCTS currently only has an obligation to manage AREC under our Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) certification. The SFI identifies AREC based on conservation status:

- critically imperiled and imperilled ecological communities (NatureServe G1/G2/S1/S2),
- Red-listed ecological communities,
- Blue-listed ecological communities, or
- ecological communities identified under FRPA or in land use objectives

BCTS completed a risk-ranking procedure on AREC meeting the above criteria, to produce the current focus list.

It is important to be aware of any [recent updates to the Forest and Range Practices Act](#), which now defines **ecological communities** as “groups of plants, animals and other organisms that interact together in a particular unique habitat. The term ‘ecological community’ is now defined as “a group of different species occupying a particular area.” This definition “allows for the classification and designation of specific ecological communities at risk, including their locations. This change will help reduce the incremental loss of important and rare habitat.” In the future, more specific legal guidance will likely become a part of BCTS’s SOMC/AREC procedures.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BC Conservation Data Centre:

- iMap tool [Conservation Data Centre \(gov.bc.ca\)](https://www.gov.bc.ca/conservation-data-centre/)
- Species and Ecosystem Explorer [Search Criteria \(gov.bc.ca\)](https://www.gov.bc.ca/species-and-ecosystem-explorer/)
- Submit Wildlife and Plant Data – Incidental Observations [Submit Wildlife / Plant Data and Information - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](https://www.gov.bc.ca/wildlife-plant-data/)

BCTS SOMC Intranet Site (BCTS internal use only):

<https://intranet.gov.bc.ca/for/bcts/sustainability/sustainability/species-of-management-concern>

BCTS AREC Intranet Site (BCTS internal use only):

<https://intranet.gov.bc.ca/for/bcts/sustainability/sustainability/at-risk-ecological-communities>

[AREC Field Confirmation Procedures](#)

[AREC Management Guidance](#)