

Development Planning Process

JULY 13, 2026



BCTS Planning Process

1

Preliminary planning area identified

A broad planning shape is developed as a starting point for review.

2

Initial review of legal and mapped constraints

BCTS reviews available mapping and known information, including legal boundaries, Old Growth Management Areas (OGMAs), Wildlife Habitat Areas, (WHA) riparian features, wildlife habitat information, terrain concerns, access constraints and other resource values.

3

Field reconnaissance and information gathering

BCTS staff complete field review where needed to better understand site conditions, operational feasibility and values that may not be fully captured in mapping.

4

Identify assessment needs

BCTS identifies what additional professional assessments or specialist reviews may be required, such as riparian, terrain stability, soils, wildlife, archaeology, hydrology, windthrow, road engineering, or other assessments.

5

Refine block design

BCTS refines the block based on field information, assessment results, legal requirements, Forest Stewardship Plan (FSP) commitments, First Nations engagement, public input and operational feasibility.

6

Cruise, engineering, appraisal and sale preparation

Once the block is sufficiently refined, additional operational work may occur, including timber cruising, road layout or engineering, appraisal and timber sale package preparation. New information at this stage may still result in further design changes.

7

Final review before harvest

The final harvest boundary is confirmed only after required reviews, assessments, engagement considerations and design refinements have been completed.

8

Advertisement and auction of Timber Sale Licence (TSL)

When the timber sale package is complete, the TSL may be advertised and auctioned through the BCTS timber sale process.



Engagement and input

First Nations engagement and public input may occur throughout steps 1–6, including during Operating Plan engagement and/or block-specific planning. Input may help identify local values, site-specific concerns, cultural information, recreation use areas, water-related concerns, wildlife observations or other information.

Common Planning Process Questions and Answers

Why does the proposed block appear to overlap with a legal OGMA, WHA, Marbled Murrelet area, community watershed, riparian area or other mapped constraint?

Shapes shown on Operating Plans, or early planning maps, may have a gross planning shape. This type of shape can include the potential harvest area as well as proposed block-level reserves, Wildlife Tree Retention Areas (WTRAs), retention patches or other areas where harvesting may not occur.

This means, shapes shown on an early map should not be interpreted as the final net harvest boundary.

Before block design can move forward, BCTS reviews it against applicable legal boundaries, mapped resource values, legal orders, legislation, professional assessment information and Forest Stewardship Plan (FSP) requirements.

If legal reserves, protected areas or required management areas apply, the block design must be refined to meet those requirements. This may result in areas being removed from the harvest boundary, retained as reserves, established as WTRAs or other retention areas, managed with specific measures, or the block being reduced, reshaped, delayed or removed from planning.

Does an overlap on an early planning map mean BCTS plans to harvest that legal area?

No. An overlap on an early planning map does not mean that area will be harvested. Early planning shapes may include gross block areas, potential reserves and areas still under review. The final harvest boundary is developed only after legal review, field verification, professional assessments, engagement and block design refinement has been completed.

Why does BCTS show rough block shapes before all constraints are removed?

Early planning shapes are used to support engagement and early review. Showing these areas early allows First Nations, stakeholders and the public to provide input before the block design is finalized.

At this stage, BCTS is still collecting information. The shape is expected to change as legal requirements, field observations, assessments and engagement input are reviewed.

What is the difference between a preliminary planning shape and a final block boundary?

A preliminary planning shape is a broad area being considered for review. It helps BCTS understand whether an area may be operationally feasible and what values or constraints need to be considered.

A final block boundary is the refined harvest boundary. It reflects legal requirements, field layout, assessments, operational design, engagement input and other planning considerations.

Does BCTS check legal boundaries before harvesting?

Yes. BCTS reviews proposed blocks against applicable legal boundaries and requirements before harvest. This can include legal OGMAs, WHAs, Ungulate Winter Ranges, riparian reserves and management areas, community watersheds, cultural heritage information, wildlife habitat features and other legal or mapped values.

BCTS must also plan and operate consistently with applicable legislation, legal orders, professional recommendations and the approved FSP.

Common Planning Process Questions and Answers

What happens if a legal OGMA or WHA is inside the early planning shape?	If OGMAs, WTAs or other applicable legal boundaries apply, BCTS must address them during the block design stage. Depending on the legal requirements and site conditions, the area may be excluded from the harvest boundary, retained as a reserve, incorporated into a no-harvest retention area or otherwise managed in accordance with the applicable order, legislation and FSP requirements.
What is a Wildlife Tree Retention Area (WTRA)?	A WTRA is a block-level retention area established to meet wildlife tree retention requirements. The amount of wildlife tree retention area required may be directed by land use planning requirements, regulations and/or commitments in the Forest Stewardship Plan. WTRAs are generally no-harvest areas within a cut block's boundaries. They may be used to retain important stand-level values such as wildlife trees, biodiversity, riparian features, ecologically sensitive sites or other values identified during planning. WTRAs do not replace the need to follow legal orders or other requirements that may apply.
How does BCTS consider drinking water, groundwater and watershed concerns?	BCTS considers water-related values through the planning process. This may include review of mapped community watersheds, streams, riparian areas, terrain conditions, drainage patterns, roads, existing watershed information and professional assessments where required. Public input can be especially helpful where it identifies local water use, unmapped springs, drainage concerns, wet areas, wells, water intakes, or other site-specific information that may not be fully shown in provincial datasets.
What assessments may be completed before a block is finalized?	The assessments depend on the block and the values present. Not every block requires every assessment. Depending on site conditions, BCTS may complete or request reviews related to streams and riparian areas, terrain stability, soils, hydrology or watershed values, wildlife habitat, archaeology, cultural heritage, windthrow, visual quality, road engineering, access, or other resource values.
Does public input actually change block design?	Public input can help inform planning, especially when it provides site-specific information that may not already be captured in existing datasets. This may include information about local trails, recreation use, drainage issues, wildlife observations, safety concerns, access concerns, community use, or other local values. Input received during engagement is reviewed and considered as planning continues. In some cases, it may lead to additional field review, further assessment, boundary changes, timing changes, or other design refinements.

Common Planning Process Questions and Answers

What kind of public comments are most useful?	The most useful comments are specific, local and connected to the area being reviewed. Examples include: → unmapped trails or recreation areas → local water use, springs, wet areas, or drainage concerns → wildlife observations or habitat features → fish-bearing streams or stream flow information → slope stability, erosion, or windthrow concerns → cultural, historical, or community use information → road safety or access concerns → information about how the area is currently used by the public
What public comments are already addressed through BCTS' planning process?	Public comments on overlaps with Old Growth Management Areas or Wildlife Habitat Areas are reviewed by our planning staff, but these areas are already part of our standard legal and planning requirements and will have been addressed. The most helpful public comments are those that provide local or site-specific information that might not be available through provincial datasets, existing mapping, field reconnaissance or professional assessments.
Can a block be removed from planning?	Yes. A block may be reduced, reshaped, delayed, or removed from planning based on legal requirements, professional assessments, First Nations engagement, public input, field conditions, operational feasibility, or other planning considerations.
Why do block shapes change over time?	Block shapes change because planning is a step-by-step process. Early shapes are refined as BCTS gathers more information from field review, legal checks, professional assessments, engagement, cruising, engineering and operational layout. A change in shape usually means new information has been considered, often provided through First Nations, interest holder or local government comment, and the block design has been updated.
Are roads also reviewed?	Yes. Road locations are reviewed as part of operational planning. Road layout may consider terrain, drainage, stream crossings, access, safety, soils, engineering requirements, environmental values and operational feasibility. In some cases, road locations may change as more information is collected.

Here is the list of Legal Legislation and Orders that BCTS follows:

Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA)

[WEBLINK \(GOV.BC.CA\)](#)

- Provides the overall legal framework for forest planning, road building, harvesting and reforestation.

Forest Planning and Practices Regulation (FPPR)

[WEBLINK \(GOV.BC.CA\)](#)

- Provides more detailed requirements for how forest practices must be carried out.
- Includes requirements related to values such as water, fish, wildlife, biodiversity, soils, riparian areas, wildlife tree retention, community watersheds, roads and reforestation.

Government Actions Regulation (GAR)

[WEBLINK \(GOV.BC.CA\)](#)

- Allows government to establish certain legal designations, objectives and stewardship measures for forest and range values.
- This includes designations such as WHAs and other legal areas or measures that may apply to forest planning.
- Where these legal designations apply, BCTS must consider and manage them during block planning.

Land Use Objectives / Legal Orders

- Identifies areas or objectives that must be considered during forest planning. Some legal spatial layers, such as legal OGMAs or other land use objectives, are established through legal orders (also listed in the Sunshine Coast FSP).

Sunshine Coast FSP

[WEBLINK \(GOV.BC.CA\)](#)

- Describes how BCTS will be consistent with applicable government objectives and legal requirements within the Forest Development Unit.
- Includes results, strategies and measures that guide how BCTS manages values such as old growth, wildlife, riparian areas, soils, water, biodiversity, cultural heritage resources and other resource values.

BCTS Sunshine Coast Operating Area: Community engagement

- In addition to meeting legislative and regulatory requirements, BCTS is committed to sustainable forest management and building strong relationships with communities through engagement and consultation. Information about current planning initiatives, watershed assessments, studies and opportunities for public input is available through the [BCTS Sunshine Coast Community Engagement webpage](#).