

PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

BCTS Strait of Georgia Guiding Principles for Forest Operations in the Snowden Forest

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The Snowden Forest is a 2500 hectare subunit of the Sayward Provincial Forest that has been utilized by the Ministry of Forests since the 1980's, to promote public awareness of integrated resource management. The Snowden is located about eight kilometres northwest of Campbell River, BC. It is an area with high timber and recreational values, featuring an extensive network of legally established trails and non-established routes enjoyed by a variety of user groups⁽¹⁾.

BC Timber Sales (BCTS) is the operational division of the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (MFLNRO) with the mandate to develop and competitively auction approximately 20% of the annual timber harvest in BC. BCTS, and its predecessor, the Small Business Forest Enterprise Program, have been operating in the Snowden for over 20 years.

The Snowden contributes to the allowable annual cut of the Strathcona Timber Supply Area in the Campbell River Forest District. As such, the Snowden has been chartered to BCTS to conduct forestry operations including road construction and timber harvesting.

The Sayward Landscape Unit Plan (LUP)⁽²⁾ was established in 2003. This LUP provides management objectives and direction for managing the Sayward Provincial Forest for biodiversity, water, recreation, wildlife, timber and other values. For further information on the Sayward LUP and Snowden trails, documents can be found on the Campbell River District webpage or the List of References at the conclusion of this document.

The Sayward LUP together with the Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA), and the BCTS Strathcona Forest Stewardship Plan⁽³⁾ provide context and opportunity for timber harvesting in the Snowden, as well as protection for legally established recreation resource features.

An organization founded on principles of safety and sound forest management, BCTS plans harvesting operations with diligent regard for all resources including recreation. Staff members work closely with the Recreation Sites and Trails Branch of the MFLNRO (the lead government agency representing recreation interests on Crown Land) on all proposed activities. BCTS must obtain approval from the Delegated Decision Maker within the Recreation Sites and Trails Branch prior to harvesting and/or road building within 10m of a legally established trail.

The long term forest management objective of BCTS in the Snowden is to consistently achieve an appropriate balance of resource values through proactive planning and conscientious practices. To successfully integrate harvesting operations with other uses of the Snowden, BCTS recognizes that harvesting must occur at a scale which is consistent with the Sayward LUP, and the expectations of society. Therefore, BCTS is committed to managing the Snowden Forest as a sustainable management unit. Road construction and harvesting operations will employ practices that consider impacts to the recreation setting and user experience.

The purpose of this document is to communicate the principles and management techniques BCTS will employ to maintain recreational values and user experience.

Consultation

BCTS will communicate harvesting and road construction proposals to identified stakeholders and First Nations. Opportunity will be given to review and comment, any input received will be considered in the development of operational plans.

Access Management

Because forest management activities require long time frames, road access is a critical component. Industrial forest roads provide access and represent long term infrastructure investments. BCTS harvesting has historically relied on the industrial forest roads surrounding the Snowden for safe and efficient access.

Forest roads suitable for log transportation do not exist in the interior portion of the Snowden. Therefore a program of new road construction and old road and rail grade reconstruction is required to facilitate harvesting. Since these forest roads may have the potential to impact the recreation setting, BCTS will be guided by the following principles during the planning, construction, and use of forest roads.

Planning

Evaluation of road location options includes due consideration for:

- Efficiency by striving to minimize the overall amount of road required to develop the area.
- Management of the visual impacts of roads on main established trails.
- Management of the physical impact of road crossings on main established trails by striving to minimize the number of crossings.
- Selecting sites for rock quarries in non-recreationally sensitive areas.
- Old rail grades and roads that allow for logical timber development may be reconstructed and utilized for timber harvesting operations.

Design and Construction

Factors considered in the design and construction of forest roads includes:

- Where possible and safe to do so, “S shaped” corners will be engineered at trail and road intersections to avoid creation of long visual corridors.
- At trail and road intersections trail continuity or connectivity will be maintained.
- Constructing primary roads to an all season standard in recognition that winter, spring and fall season operations may be desirable.
- Falling right of way widths will be done to the minimum required for safe operations.
- Sub grade construction and ditching will be designed to the minimum width required for stability, safety and adequate drainage.
- Road construction operations will have timing restrictions designed to avoid events such as the BC Bike Race. Additional timing restrictions may be applied on a project by project

basis based on stakeholder feedback and evaluation of the harvest area's recreational sensitivity.

- Where a trail is impacted by road construction, relocation of the trail will be considered in consultation with Recreation Sites & Trails BC.

Use and Deactivation

- Gated access with appropriate signage may be maintained during active road construction operations for safety reasons.
- During periods of extended inactivity vehicle access will be prohibited.
- Deactivation planning and activities for branch roads will be compatible with recreational interests in the area. These activities will be co-ordinated in consultation with Recreation Sites and Trails Branch and stakeholder input.
- During active operations, vehicle access to new mainlines will be restricted. Appropriate signage will be placed at mainline entrances.

Harvesting

BCTS harvesting in the Snowden has historically relied on existing industrial access, resulting in a pattern of cutblocks on the periphery of the area. As the central Snowden Forest lacks useable forestry roads, no recent harvesting has taken place in that area. Since forest harvesting has the potential to impact the recreation user setting and experience, BCTS planning and harvesting will be guided by the following principles:

Planning Phase

- Harvesting and road construction planning for the central Snowden Forest will occur on a low to moderate scale consistent with the recreation resource unit classification set out in the Sayward Landscape Unit Plan.
 - Subject to safety and forest health considerations, cutblocks in recreationally sensitive areas will consist of variable sized small openings. Where this principle applies, a multiple pass harvest strategy will be implemented utilizing silviculture systems appropriate for the given site and stand conditions.
 - Cutblock size and design will be determined site specifically, dictated by limits of acceptable alteration to recreation user setting and experience. Factors to be considered in evaluating alteration of recreation user setting and experience include:
 - Time taken by an average user to traverse through a harvested area.
 - Focus of recreation user (relaxed on flat grade or intense on steep downhill).
 - Opening design or shape (corners and straight lines versus curving boundaries).
 - Distance to forested edge from the trail.
 - Adjacent forest cover attributes (age, density, species composition, crown closure)
 - Amount and nature of previous and/or planned harvest disturbance.
 - Amount and nature of road intersections.
 - The relative amount of existing and planned alteration to the recreation setting on a specific section of trail.

Harvesting Phase

- BCTS will provide advance notice of any trail closures as a result of harvesting operations. Trail closure notices will be posted at all entrances to the affected trail.
- Harvest operations will have timing restrictions designed to avoid events such as the BC Bike Race. Additional timing restrictions will be applied on a project by project basis based on stakeholder feedback and evaluation of the harvest area's recreational sensitivity.

Post Harvest

- BCTS will make reasonable efforts to prevent motorized access to cutblocks, including installation of gates and other structures to block vehicle access.
- Trails impacted by harvesting will be cleared post harvest, and trail structures will be rebuilt if required. This work will be undertaken in cooperation with Recreation Sites & Trails BC.

Links

1. **Stewardship.** Snowden Forest Trails Map. Campbell River Natural Resource District. [Online]
http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/ftp/TSG/external!/publish/Web/Snowden/Snowden_Demonstration_Forest_Trail%20Map_Mar2010.pdf
2. **Stewardship.** Sayward Landscape Unit Plan (LUP). *Campbell River Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resources Operations.* [Online]
http://ilmbwww.gov.bc.ca/slrp/srmp/coast/campbell_river/sayward.htm.
3. **BCTS Strait of Georgia.** British Columbia Timber Sales. [Online]
<http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/BCTS/areas/TSG.htm>