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Resource Values Assessment: Non-Spatial Landscape Biodiversity Objectives for Prince George TSA

State of Knowledge:

- Managing for old-growth forests is a critical component of implementing measures to conserve ecosystems and species biodiversity because it is difficult to reproduce once lost.
- Non-spatial objectives, which express a target percentage for old growth retention within a geographic unit, are an alternative approach to spatially locating and mapping defined Old Growth Management Areas (OGMAs).
- The *Order Establishing Landscape Biodiversity Objectives for the Prince George Timber Supply Area* (the Order) is a non-spatial order approved on October 20, 2004.
- It has been accepted as the best available information for managing landscape biodiversity in the Prince George Timber Supply Area.
- The Order, developed by B.C. government staff and forest licensees, balances environmental, economic and social costs and benefits. Three clauses allow for flexibility in managing old forest objectives:
 - D.3. Epidemic or Catastrophic Events: A representative portion of stands that have been affected by an epidemic or catastrophic event may contribute to meeting the Old Forest Retention and the Old Interior Forest objectives.
 - D.4. A Portion of Younger Age Classes: Where it can be demonstrated that equal or better conservation benefits would result, up to 20% of the Old Forest Retention and Old Interior Forest objectives may comprise younger age classes.
 - D.5. Alternatives to the Order: Where either the Old Forest Retention or the Old Interior Forest objectives cannot be achieved, with consideration of the timely and economic harvesting of timber rights, then a recruitment strategy must be submitted and complied with.

Current condition:

- Prince George TSA has 27,600 hectares in OGMAs. The *Order Establishing Landscape Biodiversity Objectives for the Prince George Timber Supply Area* applies to the whole timber supply area. Licensees must report on the amount of old forest in each unit and meet rules around thresholds – the OGMAs help to meet the non-spatial Order.
- A technical working group of government and forest licensees, which has been working on issues related to old growth since 2002, is exploring ways to improve the Order, or the way the Order is implemented, to increase timber supply without risking landscape-level biodiversity.

Sustainability Risk:

- Changes to how old growth is managed in the Prince George TSA has been identified as a potential source of mid-term timber supply through analysis done by government in 2011. It analyzed eight scenarios for the potential to increase timber supply, and identified the potential risks to landscape-level biodiversity.
- The option of changing the definition of old forest for some or all of the units in the Order has been identified as an option that may increase timber supply while having a minimal impact on biodiversity. Further analysis is underway for timber supply and biodiversity impacts.
- Reducing old forest area in the Prince George TSA will result in the same risks identified as other regions, such as:
 - Reducing ecosystem resilience and limiting options to respond to changing conditions
 - Reducing habitat for old growth reliant species

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