



Wet'suwet'en Yintah Stewardship Document

Interim Document for Decisions under the Forests and Range Practices Act, FRPA

Office of the Wet'suwet'en
Natural Resource Department
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Updates

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Introduction

While the Wet'suwet'en and the Crown define how their authorities will interface, this document will help guide provincial decision makers and licensees working under the *Forests and Range Practices Act, FRPA*.

The Wet'suwet'en Nation is comprised of five Clans, 13 House Groups and 38 House Territories (*see Appendix II*). All Wet'suwet'en Clan and House members have the right and responsibility to participate in decision making processes respecting issues affecting their interests through informal gatherings and customary Feast protocols and processes. House leaders, or their designate, lead these traditional processes with support from Wing Chiefs, elders, and Father Clan designates.

“We are the land and the land is us. The health and well being of the Yintah reflects the health and well being of the people”

Purpose of this Document

The purpose of this document is to help guide provincial decision makers and licensees in their decisions and planning. It can be referenced in decision packages and the information should be shared with all individuals working under *FRPA*.

This document also supports the Nations decisions in land management. The content within has been provided by the House Groups as areas where more management is required.

How to Use this Document

The document has been broken down into sections based on the stewardship values or areas requiring management, then further divided into tables where the Valued Ecosystem Components (VECs) are listed. Each VEC has a list of prescriptions that should be referenced or added as part of the decisions.

The document is to be considered as an interim document, for those decisions under *FRPA*. A more wholesome documentation can be expected for land-based decisions made under other Acts.

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1. WET'SUWET'EN YINTAH PRINCIPLES

- A. Healthy, fully functioning ecosystems provide the basis for sustaining communities, economies, cultures and the quality of human life; therefore, ecological sustainability is fundamental to land and resource management.
- B. Empowered and healthy communities play a leadership role in sustaining healthy ecosystems, cultures and economies.
- C. Focus planning on the needs of the ecosystems and the values that you want to maintain.
- D. Incorporate the best of existing knowledge (e.g., traditional, local and western science) into planning and decision-making.
- E. Knowledge of natural processes and human interactions is incomplete and inherently limited, and decisions made in the present can pose unacceptable risks for the future. Apply the Precautionary Principle and practice adaptive management in decision-making. Monitor the consequences of decisions and adopt a learning approach to planning.
- F. Maintain natural, social and economic capital in the region and preserve the full range of options for future generations.
- G. Respect individuals, communities of interest (including businesses) and cultures.

2. STEWARDSHIP VALUES AND VALUED ECOSYSTEM COMPONENTS (VECS)

The Wet'suwet'en Nation are responsible for the sustainable stewardship of all Values on their Yintah. Non-timber values include: cultural heritage, cultural identity and integrity, ceremonial use, medicinal plants, food plants and plants utilized for materials, wildlife, fish and their habitat, water quality and quantity and ecological integrity.

Valued Ecosystem Components or VECs are critical for planning; responding to proposed development or projects; for Project Management issues; and for follow-up monitoring. Declaring VECs can help to set priorities regarding the collection and monitoring of baseline characteristics and conditions. The value of an ecosystem component may be determined on the basis of cultural or scientific concepts, ideals, or concerns. Declaring VECs can help set priorities regarding the collection and monitoring of baseline characteristics and conditions. Using VECs ensures specific aspects of the ecosystem are identified as important and are addressed in whatever context they are used. However, use of VECs needs to also include interactions within the ecosystem, as well as their function in the ecosystem as a whole.

Each of the Values listed in the tables below can be considered a VEC for the purpose of the document and associated prescriptions should be followed.

2.1. RIPARIAN MANAGEMENT

Table 1: Riparian Management

Value	Prescription
Stream Health	a) Establish functional stream, lake and wetland reserves that protect sensitive and highly diverse ecosystems and adjacent values: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Default reserves of at least one tree length unless risk to functional integrity can be proven benign; ii. Increase the reserve size according to aquatic system size and wildlife corridor use; (e.g., 100m on S1-S4 streams, 30m on S5-S6¹); iii. Ensure vertical and horizontal structure is maintained by use of reserves (e.g., Maintain wetland biodiversity); iv. Stabilize riparian reserve vegetation over time.

¹ This could include a 50m Reserve and an additional 50m machine free zone to achieve the 100m.

	<p>b) There should be no construction of roads within the riparian reserve area, except when a road is required for a stream crossing:</p> <p>c) Limit stream sedimentation²:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Limit stream crossings; ii. Collection settling ponds for suspended substances before stream entrance; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Direct road run-off into settling ponds rather than stream environments;
Fish Habitat	<p>a) Utilize the Fisheries Information Summary System tool (FISS) to determine the presence of fish;</p> <p>b) Establish reserves as listed under Stream Health.</p>

2.2. WILDLIFE AND THEIR HABITAT

Table 2: Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat

Value	Prescription
Habitat	<p>a) Use visual screening where cut blocks are located adjacent to roads;</p> <p>b) The visual screening will comply with wildlife danger tree and road safety considerations to ensure the stand structure of the visual screening is not compromised in the long-term;</p> <p>c) Visual screening should be prescribed within a cut block located immediately adjacent to all roads (visual vegetation buffers);</p> <p>d) Retention of deciduous tree species should be prescribed in the logging plan providing there is a deciduous component in the stand structure;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Mixed stands of coniferous/deciduous species, where the deciduous component is larger than 60% of the stand, the area will be reserved from harvesting.

² In areas where there is a higher risk of sedimentation licensees may consider a Sedimentation Plan where mitigation measures are articulated.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e) Where harvesting occurs adjacent to south facing slopes, wildlife tree patches and/or wildlife tree retention areas are required adjacent to or on the south facing slopes; f) Protect key habitat features for all species, sensitive to anthropogenic impact (e.g. dens, mineral licks, nests, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Licensees should be recording features and also reporting to the OW for knowledge keeping and transfer.
Wildlife Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Utilize Predictive Ecosystem Mapping (PEM) or Terrain Resource Inventory Mapping (TRIM) and/or Vegetation Resource Inventory (VRI); <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Delineated zones of influences, ii. Critical habitats; iii. Cultural harvest characteristics. b) Establish vegetation buffers along travel corridors; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. There may be a balance of buffers vs. right of way clearing to decrease ungulate mortality. c) Minimize access to seasonally important areas (e.g., wintering grounds, calving grounds, breeding grounds); d) In the name of public safety establish speed limits, appropriate for local conditions; e) Use 100% native plant seeding in open areas.
Fragmentation of Habitat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Design block boundaries along natural gradients in order to avoid abrupt edges; b) Avoid extensive road systems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Avoid loop roads; b. Avoid construction within 50m of natural openings greater than 0.5ha in size. c) Stabilize managed stand boundaries through promoting naturally existing and anthropogenic stabilized tree age gradients; d) Manage all stands for ecosystem based maximal structural diversity and avoid structurally uniform plantations.

2.3. CULTURAL HERITAGE

Table 3: Cultural Heritage Resources

Value	Prescription
Cultural Modified Trees (CMT's)³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) OW may complete a reconnaissance and/or recommend an AIA based on the research and findings; b) CMT's must be GPSed, flagged and clearly marked; c) Any data and reports should be provided to the OW for record keeping; d) CMT management should primarily begin with retaining features within Wildlife Tree Patches, Reserves or the like; e) Secondary management is to stub all CMT's above the feature (scars and blazes where the cambium is stripped, groups of <10 CMTs etc.).
Cultural Trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Trails must be GPSed, flagged and clearly marked; b) Any data and reports should be provided to the OW for record keeping; c) Cultural Trails management should primarily begin with avoiding developing cut blocks over trail features; d) Secondary Trail management: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Where the trail is located in a mixed forest stand a reserve of three tree lengths (~100m) is required to protect the feature; ii. Where the trail is located in a pine dominant stand the follow measure need to be taken: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timber harvesting may occur providing understory retention strategies are written into the logging plan, skid trail crossing over the feature need to be minimized and pre-works must be signed off by all equipment operators on site. • Once the block is harvested and planted, House members will be hired to pull seedlings from trail bed to an approximate width of 3.0m. This will ensure the travel

³ CMT Management prescriptions should be written into logging plans and pre-work sessions. If features are identified an Archaeological Impact Assessment should be completed by a qualified professional prior to harvesting.

	<p>corridor will function into the future. CHR features such as Home places, camps, cache pits, cultural depressions must be GPSed, flagged and point features recorded into the Office of the Wet'suwet'en CHR Input Database.</p> <p>e) Any other action taken within these areas must be approved by the Wet'suwet'en House Group.</p>
Other Cultural Heritage Features (cache pits, homeplaces, etc.)	<p>a) Feature management should primarily strive to avoid developing cut blocks over features;</p> <p>b) Secondary CHR feature management should primarily strive to retain features within wildlife tree patches.</p>
Archaeological Chance Find Procedures	<p>a) Archaeological Chance Find Procedures should be in place for any works where ground altering activities are to take place. This should be shared with the Nation.</p>

2.4. OTHER ECOSYSTEM COMPONENTS

Table 4: Ecosystems Components

Value	Prescription
Rare Ecosystems	<p>a) Higher quality ecosystem stratification conducted by qualified individuals⁴;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Utilize Predictive Ecosystem Mapping (PEM) or Terrain Resource Inventory Mapping (TRIM) and/or Vegetation Resource Inventory (VRI); <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Delineated zones of influences, ii. Critical habitats; iii. Cultural harvest characteristics. <p>b) Retain Rare Ecosystems within the Wet'suwet'en Yintah as listed under Appendix I;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Preservation of native species, biodiversity and site conditions; ii. Delineate even small patches of rare eco-associations and protect them in retention areas.

⁴ To avoid misinterpretation and misidentification and/or lumping of rare site series with common ones because of limited strata size.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c) Adjustment of block boundaries and/or increase Wildlife Tree Patch size and inventory in the case of rare plant communities; d) Design roads with minimum interference on rare terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems; e) Limitation of grazing, seeding and fertilizing in and around areas with rare plant communities.
Soils and Hydrological Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Maintain sufficient vegetation cover at all times to avoid soil erosion; b) Maintain hydrological processes within the block area; c) Design roads with minimum interference on rare terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems; d) New roads should not impact hydrologic processes or connectivity (i.e. more culverts, not redirecting from wetlands) e) Minimize soil disturbance/compaction; f) Restrict the number and timing of harvest areas within each watershed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Limit activities seasonally if possible.
Forest Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Promote early seral stage development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Tolerate deciduous and herbal vegetation as temporary component of the rotation; ii. Adjust stocking to natural levels. b) Promote vertical and horizontal diversity (i.e. structure): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Adjust rotation to natural disturbance patterns; ii. Retain undergrowth where applicable; iii. Retain percentage of existing stand; iv. Retain snags and potential older trees for Large Organic Debris (LOD) or Coarse Woody Debris (CWD). c) Restock in intervals; d) Increase tolerance for non-crop species; e) If fertilization is to occur, avoid the use of products with the presence of Boron.

2.5. RANGE USE BASED DECISIONS

Table 5: Range Use

Value	Prescription
Land/Water⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Restrict access of free ranging domestic animals from riparian zones, lakeshores and wetlands; b) Assess proposed areas regarding rare ecosystem types; c) Assess the density and importance of aquatic ecosystems for the proposed areas; d) Assess the potential for competition with existing wildlife species; e) Assess the negative impacts on culturally important activities; f) Since wildlife are more susceptible to domestic animal diseases avoid sensitive areas;
Fertilizer use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) If fertilization is to occur, avoid the use of products with the presence of Boron. b) Maps and shapefiles of areas are to be provided to the OW office for distribution to members.

⁵ Eutrophication of streams and lakes, potential selective reduction/elimination of desired plant species, contamination, and disease transfer to wildlife.

APPENDIX I Rare Ecosystems List for Wet'suwet'en Yintah

At a higher classification level, the Wet'suwet'en have identified rare plant communities within their traditional territories. These rare plant communities are Site Series that have a representation of less than 1% of the total Wet'suwet'en territories (22 000 km²).

Based on their limited distribution as well as the rarity of their biotic components the Wet'suwet'en desire full conservation of these plant communities.

SBS dk 02 SBS dk 03 SBS dk 04 SBS dk 08 SBS dk 09 SBS dk 09 SBS dk 10 SBS dk 31 SBS dk 32 SBS dk 81 SBS dk 82	SBS mc 2 02 SBS mc 2 03 SBS mc 2 05 SBS mc 2 06 SBS mc 2 07 SBS mc 2 09 SBS mc 2 12 SBS mc 2 31 SBS mc 2 32 SBS mc 2 81 SBS mc 2 82	ESSFmk 02 ESSFmk 03 ESSFmk 04 ESSFmk 05 ESSFmk 06 ESSFmk 07 ESSFmk 08 ESSFmk 31 ESSFmk 32	ESSFmc 02 ESSFmc 03 ESSFmc 09 ESSFmc 09 ESSFmc 10 ESSFmc 31 ESSFmc 32
ESSFwv 01 ESSFwv 02 ESSFwv 03 ESSFwv 04 ESSFwv 05 ESSFwv 06 ESSFwv 07 ESSFwv 08 ESSFwv 09	ICH mc 1 01 ICH mc 1 01b ICH mc 1 02 ICH mc 1 03 ICH mc 1 04 ICH mc 1 05 ICH mc 1 06	ICH mc 2 01 ICH mc 2 01b ICH mc 2 02 ICH mc 2 03 ICH mc 2 04 ICH mc 2 05 ICH mc 2 06 ICH mc 2 07 ICH mc 2 08 ICH mc 2 51 ICH mc 2 52 ICH mc 2 53 ICH mc 2 54	CWH ws 2 01 CWH ws 2 02 CWH ws 2 03 CWH ws 2 04 CWH ws 2 05 CWH ws 2 06 CWH ws 2 07 CWH ws 2 08 CWH ws 2 09 CWH ws 2 10 CWH ws 2 11 CWH ws 2 31 CWH ws 2 32
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APPENDIX II Map of Wet'suwet'en Yintah

