Development and Priority Ranking
of the Evaluation Questions for the
Forest and Range Evaluation Program (FREP)

Prepared by

Forest & Range Evaluation Program Working Group

If you have any questions or comments about this document, please contact:
Peter Bradford -- Peter.Bradford@gov.bc.ca
Frank Barber -- Frank.Barber@gov.bc.ca

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Evaluating Forest Management in British Columbia

The Forest and Range Evaluation Program (FREP) was established in 2003 by the Ministry of Forests and Range (MOFR) and the Ministry of Environment (MOE).

The FREP Mission:

To ensure British Columbia is a world leader in sustainable forest management by providing the high quality, science-based information we need for decision-making and continuous improvement of our forest practices, policies and legislation.

The purpose of the Forest and Range Evaluation Program is to determine whether forest and range practices in British Columbia are achieving government's objectives for the resource values identified in the Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA).

The specific objectives of FREP are to:

- Evaluate the status or trends of resource values and determine the causal factors;
- Determine whether resource values are being managed in a sustainable manner through proven or alternative forest practices; and,
- Recommend changes to forest and range practices, policies and legislation, where required.

To achieve these objectives, FREP internal and external partners will be asked to:
- Identify, prioritize and re-assess evaluation questions that need addressing;
- Develop measurable, cost-effective indicators, methodologies, and quality assurance protocols for testing evaluation questions;
- Evaluate priority questions through intensive, extensive and routine evaluations;
- Communicate the results of evaluations; and,
- Develop recommendations for changes to forest practices, legislation and policy, for consideration by the FRPA Joint Management Committee (JMC) and the Program Sponsor (Chief Forester).

For more information on the purpose, objectives, scope, deliverables, stakeholders, structure, and management of the Forest and Range Evaluation Program, please refer to these resources:
- the FREP web site at: http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfp/frep/
- Any member of the Forest and Range Evaluation Working Group (FREWG). Appendix 1 lists FREWG members and their contact information.
- The FREP Evaluation and Monitoring Strategy (http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfp/frep/site_files/pmgmt/PM-FREP_Monitoring_and_Evaluation_Strategy_17-Feb-06.pdf) provides a comprehensive program overview, along with links to detailed program documents.

Setting Evaluation Priorities -- Overview

FREP identifies the need for, prioritizes and conducts timely, scientifically valid evaluations and monitoring. The process for determining which evaluation and monitoring initiatives are highest priority, and therefore a priority for funding, is laid out in this document.

FREP Priority Evaluation and Monitoring Questions

Identification of priority evaluation and monitoring questions regarding the evaluation of British Columbia's natural resource values is the foundation for allocating FREP resources. The priority evaluation questions (see example below) form the basis for developing appropriate resource stewardship monitoring indicators and protocols used to evaluate the status, tends and sustainability of BC's Forest & Range resource values. The questions are also used to identify important intensive evaluation projects. For a complete description of activities related to the development of evaluation questions or other activities conducted under FREP, please consult the FREP web site at: http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfp/frep/. The current list of FREP evaluation questions can be found at: http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfp/frep/about/questions.htm#questions. An example question from the 2004/05 questions, for the Riparian/Fish value is:

Are riparian forestry and range practices effective in maintaining the structural integrity and proper functioning of stream ecosystems and other aquatic resource features over both the short and long term?

Each year, the FREP Priority Evaluation Questions will be updated based on the steps detailed in Table A.

Table A: Steps for the Annual Update of FREP Priority Evaluation

	Task	Responsibility.	Timing	Output(s)
1	Identify most current version of FREP[1] Priority Evaluation Question List	FREP Lead	September	Baseline for preparing the upcoming year's FREP Priority Evaluation Question List.
2	Provide RVTLs[2] with the most up to date (i.e., current fiscal) version of the FREP Priority Evaluation Question List for review and updating based on RVTs[3] lessons learned from past year, new information and knowledge, and awareness of stakeholder[4] expectations.	FREP Lead	September	First draft of the upcoming year's FREP Priority Evaluation Question List ready for circulation to stakeholders for input.
		RVTLs (prepare draft update of questions)	September to October	
3	Distribute draft 1 of the updated FREP Priority Evaluation Question List to identified stakeholders[4] (stakeholders listed in FREP Communications Plan) requesting review and comments on proposed questions and priorities.	FREP Lead	Nov (20 days for Stakeholders to provide comments)	Comments and suggestions for modifications to questions, new questions, and priorities as seen from stakeholders' perspective.
4	Compile stakeholder responses and distribute to RVTLs.	FREP Lead	November	Draft 2 of the next year's FREP Priority Evaluation Question List ready for application of "SMART[5]" criteria.
5	Review Stakeholders responses and apply "SMART" criteria to all questions on list	RVTLs	December to January	Draft 3 of the next year's FREP Priority Evaluation Question List -- refined draft questions listed in order of priority as determined by the RVTL (in context of stakeholder input).
6	FREWG review and set priorities for upcoming year based on criteria in Table B.	FREWG	January	FREWG approved next year's FREP Priority Evaluation Question List ready for Chief Forester and PAC review and approval.
7	Chief Forester, JMC[6] and PAC[7] review of FREWG[8] approved Priority Evaluation Question List	FREP Lead	January to February	Approved upcoming year's FREP Priority Evaluation Question List.
8	Communication of approved question list to stakeholders.	FREWG	February to March	Posting of the upcoming year's Priority Evaluation Question List on FREP web site
9	Linkage of approved FREP Priority Evaluation Question List with available budget.	FREP Lead	February to April	Development and approval of the FREP Work Plan.
10	Begin evaluation and monitoring work associated with ongoing projects, current priorities and available resources.	Project Leads	Feb/06	Begin developing project plans for "approved" projects in February 2006.

Questions:

[1]FREP – Forest and Range Evaluation Program
[2]RVTL – Resource Value Team Lead
[3]RVT – Resource Value Team
[4]Stakeholders – see FREP Communications Plan
(http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfp/frep/pmgmt/index.htm)
[5]SMART Principles for FREP Evaluation Questions

- Is the question specific (i.e., focused, bound, tied to specific deliverables, and have forest management applications)?
- Is the question measurable (i.e., tied to specific deliverables, with measurable indicators)?
- Is the question agreed to (i.e., internal and external stakeholder involvement, links to corporate performance measures)?
- Is the question realistic (cost and funding, available expertise, timeframe)?
- Is the question time bound, or can it be made time bound (i.e., start and end dates for completion of all deliverables)?

[6]JMC – (Forest and Range Practices Act) Joint Management Committee
[7]PAC – (Minister of Forests and Range) Practices Advisory Committee
[8]FREWG – Forest and Range Evaluation Working Group
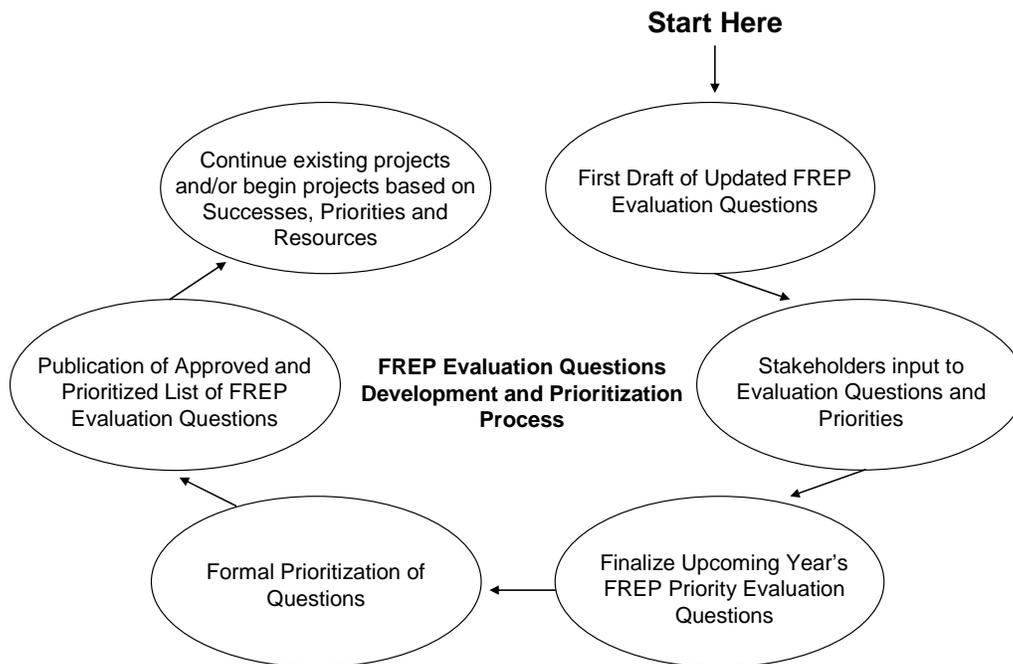
Start Here

**Figure 1: FREP Evaluation Questions
Development and Prioritization Process**

Table B: FREWG Considerations for Ranking of the Resource Evaluation Questions

A	**Question supports continuation of existing successful initiative (40 points)**
B	**Compatibility with government priorities (maximum 20 points)**
	1. Link to Service Plans and Regional priorities
	2. Area(s) of highest public concern
	3. Likely to lead to FRPA improvements
C	**Benefits to FREP (maximum 20 points)**
	1. Quick successes and deliverables, and/or ongoing initiative
	2. Opportunity for multi-value indicators and/or evaluations
	3. Improved partnerships and/or external linkages
D	**Risks to delivery (maximum 20 points)**
	1. Available expertise
	2. Stakeholder support
	3. Cost

Step 1. Upon submission of evaluation questions for all eleven resource values, all questions will be entered into a spreadsheet ranking template (Table B). This spreadsheet will be sent out to all members of FREWG asking them to complete the ranking.

Step 2. Data from all completed templates from FREWG members will be summarized into two summary tables: Table 1 -- the highest priority question per resource value and Table 2 -- the top 10 priority questions overall regardless of resource value.