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Ministry of Forests

WHAT IS RESULTS-BASED FOREST MANAGEMENT?

In its New Era document, government promised to streamline the Forest Practices Code to establish a workable, results-based code, with tough penalties for non-compliance.

British Columbia will achieve high-quality forest management as a result of the results-based forest and range practices regime. It offers a new way of doing business—it encourages innovation and it holds industry responsible for outcomes.

Under the forest and range practices legislation, government and industry resource professionals are more interested in on-the-ground results and resource protection than process and paperwork. Government sets objectives and desired outcomes, and forest companies propose results or strategies that reflect these. The companies are then accountable for the results through a rigorous government compliance and enforcement regime.

British Columbia has the ingredients needed to achieve success, including:

- skilled resource professionals in industry and government who understand the importance of careful, innovative forest management;
- stakeholders who demonstrated during the results-based code consultation that they are prepared to play a thoughtful role in the process;
- a forest industry with the ability to provide high-quality and sustainable forest management; and
- a credible third-party auditor, the Forest Practices Board, that will ensure the environment is protected.

The Forest and Range Practices Act and regulations focus the attention of government and the forest sector to actual work on the ground, rather than complex paper processes. The Forest Practices Code improved environmental protection but allowed little operational flexibility. When it was introduced in 1995, it required that government approve six operational plans—of which three still remain.

Under the Forest and Range Practices Act, a forest company submits one comprehensive plan—the forest stewardship plan—for approval before receiving a cutting permit to authorize harvesting. The forest stewardship plan can be for a term of up to five years, where existing forest development plans must be approved every one or two years.

The forest stewardship plan must be consistent with the objectives of local land use plans or other objectives such as those set by the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection for species at risk. Even where land use plans are not yet in place, there are legally binding objectives for high-priority biodiversity values such as old growth, management of streamside areas, maximum cutblock size, and retention of coarse woody debris and wildlife trees.

Government looked at forest management regimes in a number of Canadian provinces and U.S. states. It is not easy to compare jurisdictions because there are so many factors involved in forest management, but it is clear that British Columbia meets or exceeds key aspects of forest management in other jurisdictions.

British Columbia is a leader in moving from a prescriptive forest management regime to one that is more adaptable to site-specific conditions. It is one of the first in North America that requires companies to pursue sustainable forest management planning and to provide measurable results. It is also one of the first to require that companies specifically address biodiversity.

And, like other jurisdictions, British Columbia continues to ensure public views are addressed early in the planning process and to maintain a strong independent auditing system through the Forest Practices Board. The Forest Practices Board has noted continuous improvements in forest practices as a general trend in the six years it has been conducting audits.

British Columbia forest companies are actively acquiring independent third-party forest management certification, recognizing they need to provide proof that they practise sustainable forest management to attract the all-important international markets. Under the new results-based regime, some companies may apply even stricter standards to address the demands of a specific export market.

The forest and range practices legislation addresses the New Era commitment to cut the forestry regulatory burden without compromising environmental standards. It allows resource professionals from both government and industry to spend more of their time in the field making sure forest values are protected than in the office preparing and approving plans.

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Contact: Donald McDonald
Communications Director
250 387-8486