

# **Replacing forest stewardship plans and sustaining dialogue about forest resource stewardship in the Cariboo Region, April 2016**

## **1.0 Introduction**

As delegated decision makers responsible for administration of Forest Stewardship Plans (FSPs) in the Cariboo Region, the undersigned are sharing information we consider to be of weight and relevance to preparation and adjudication of replacement FSPs.

This document is aligned with Chief Forester guidance (attached) on the replacement of FSPs. It is intended to enhance business efficiency and administrative fairness by encouraging dialogue between decision makers and forest professionals to inform preparation and administration of replacement FSPs.

The information provided in this document does not make or infer a decision on a submitted FSP or any other forest authorisation. This information will allow the professional community to understand the forest resource stewardship factors that are of concern to the undersigned decision makers in advance of preparing FSP submissions. It should be understood that this document is meant to encourage deliberate, early dialogue with the undersigned decision makers, before professionals commence development of plan content. A focus solely on the matters addressed herein, in the absence of expected dialogue, may not be sufficient to ensure that many core forest resource stewardship factors are fully considered when preparing replacement FSPs.

Special attention to the matters set out in this document, and submission of sufficient evidence to support legally required plan content, will facilitate timely and efficient administration of replacement FSP submissions.

## **2.0 Replacement of Forest Stewardship Plans**

Existing FSPs have been extended once and have been in effect for nearly 10 years. Significant changes to the regional land base and forest resources require that FSPs need to be replaced. The content of FSPs must consider the current condition of landscape units and natural resource attributes after intensive timber salvaging (carried out under relaxed land use policy and practice standards), and as timber harvesting transitions back to green timber profiles.

Preparation and adjudication of replacement FSPs will need to consider substantive interests in stewardship of forest resources. First Nations are concerned about protection of aboriginal rights which are closely associated with conserving the abundance and distribution of wildlife resources. Stakeholders, including the holders of government granted non-forest tenures and privileges, harbour concerns about the conservation of resource values upon which their business interests are based. Public expectations respecting environmental sustainability, community stability and economic resiliency, requires focussed attention on resource stewardship considering current land conditions. Cumulative effects assessments are revealing that certain resource values are at significant likelihood of material negative consequences should forest practices not be revised to address identified hazards that are revealed in the current condition of the region's forested landscapes.

The Forest Practices Board (August 2015, May 2014, May 2006) and a parliamentary review (Government of BC, August 2015) have raised the prospect that revision of FSP content and forestry planning practices is required in an effort to meet public expectations through improved engagement, and to ensure that forestry operational plans comply with legislation. Important components of FSP content require particular improvements to meet legally established standards.

The competitiveness of the forest sector relies in part on securing access to timber resources through sustained social license. Forestry operational plans that clearly respond to First Nations, stakeholder and public interests will bolster trust in the forest sector's resource stewardship enterprise, securing access to these resources for the benefit of our communities. Within the Cariboo Region, the undersigned decision makers consider it increasingly important that the multiple licensees, who typically operate across a common land base, collaborate as a single entity in forestry planning and public engagement.

The necessary transition from dead salvage to the green timber profiles provides a timely opportunity for replacement of FSPs which reflect upon land use policy and legislative provisions applicable to non-salvage harvesting. FSP content will need to address the regulatory and land use policy differences that influence planning for salvage as compared to green harvesting. The transition to green timber profiles will require increased harvesting within the region's dry belt fir ecosystems. FSP content applicable to stewardship of the dry belt fir ecosystems will require special management considering the silvics and autecology of Douglas fir, and the unique intersection of resource values supported by these ecosystems.

## **2.1 Extension of current Forest Stewardship Plans**

Under existing circumstances, the undersigned delegated decision makers consider that there are very limited grounds upon which to justify extension of a current FSP. During the period of time that current FSPs have been in effect, natural disturbances and salvage harvesting have caused substantive changes to the condition of land and resources.

After nearly 10 years, and considering the extent of changes across regional forest lands, First Nations and stakeholders deserve opportunity to inform forestry operational planning through replacement of FSPs. Operational planning at the FSP level sets the stage for all other forest development authorisations. FSP replacement offers significant strategic opportunity to engage First Nations and stakeholders in a manner that facilitates open dialogue and offers strongly visible response to their concerns.

As delegated decision makers, we consider that an extension of a current FSP could be justifiable where time is required for preparation of a replacement FSP, possibly 8 to 12 months. Licensees who may consider extending an FSP are strongly encouraged to engage with decision makers well in advance of FSP expiry. Any request for extension of a current FSP beyond 8 to 12 months will require the holder of a forest license to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the undersigned decision makers that the current FSP meets the requirements of Forest Planning and Practices Regulation 28(b)(i) and 28(b)(ii), and in doing so addresses the natural resource

conditions prevalent across the region. We also consider that information compiled through monitoring, from First Nations and from holders of other government granted rights, is relevant to consideration of any longer term extension of current FSPs

## **2.2 Expectations respecting “results” and “strategies”**

The Forest Practices Board has identified particular concerns with the “results” and “strategies” that comprise the core content of current FSPs. The Board’s investigations provide relevant information for continuous improvement of plan content through FSP replacement. As delegated decision makers, we consider that the Forest Practices Board’s findings in respect of FSP content apply within the Cariboo Region. The replacement of FSP is an opportunity to address any vulnerability that may be apparent in the content of current FSPs.

### **2.2.2 Evidentiary considerations respecting “results” and “strategies”**

As delegated decision makers we rely upon the forest professionals who will prepare FSP content to provide sufficient evidence to support a FSP submission and demonstrate that “results” and “strategies” comply with all legal requirements. While such evidence is not legally required as plan content, we expect this evidence to accompany FSP submissions to describe how the “results” and “strategies” for each objective comply with the definition of these terms, as set out in the Forest Planning and Practices Regulation.

As delegated decision makers we expect to consider:

- evidence explaining how each “result” in an FSP is comprised of *measurable or verifiable outcomes* in respect of an established objective, and
- how each “strategy” in an FSP is comprised of *measurable or verifiable steps or practices* that will be carried out in respect of an established objective, and
- clear descriptions of *the situations and circumstances that determine where in a forest development unit (FDU) the “results” or “strategies” will be applied.*

In respect of “strategies”, and consistent with part b) of the definition of “strategy”, the undersigned delegated decision makers consider it important that FSP content include clear descriptions of how the measurable or verifiable steps or practices comprising a “strategy” will influence the spatial and temporal location and design of cut blocks and roads, and the delivery of outcomes on those cut blocks or roads within FDUs.

## **2.3 Objectives requiring plan content**

For the purposes of FSP preparation in the Cariboo Region, it is important to know that the objectives set by government for this Region are set out in 4 sources:

- the Land Use Order applicable to the CCLUP area,
- orders established under the Government Actions Regulation that establish objectives,
- the CCLUP 90 Day Implementation Process Final Report, and
- the Forest Planning and Practices Regulation (FPPR).

The Land Use Order has not replaced all of the objectives set out in the 90 day Report, nor has the Order replaced all of the objectives set out in the FPPR. The following link provides access to relevant reference material respecting objectives set by government in relation to land use policy in the Cariboo Region.

<https://www.for.gov.bc.ca/tasb/SLRP/plan104.html>

As delegated decision makers, we expect forest professionals to consider the slate of objectives set by government that require results and strategies in replacement FSPs in the Cariboo Region. Further, the undersigned delegated decision makers expect to engage with forest professionals in reviewing forest management issues that have come about or are expected to arise, in relation to some of the objectives set by government.

### **2.3.2 Evidentiary considerations respecting FSP content in relation to established objectives**

In respect of FSP content in relation to all applicable objectives set by government, the undersigned delegated decision makers will rely upon forest professionals who have prepared FSP content to provide sufficient evidence to accompany FSP submissions that explains:

- how “results” or “strategies” are consistent with each of the objectives that require FSP content; and
- should an FSP not include “results” or “strategies” for one or more objectives set by government, and explanation why that content is not part of the submitted FSP.

The undersigned decision makers expect to consider evidence that reveals how “results” or “strategies” have been developed in consideration of current land and resource conditions.

- How does the proposed FSP content suit the current and forecast circumstances respecting the condition of land and resources, while being consistent with the objective?
- How do the “results” and “strategies” account for the operations of multiple licensees and BC Timber Sales on a common land base?
- Where such information is available, how have the following sources of information been considered in drafting of proposed “results” and “strategies” for each objective?
  - The outcome of Cumulative Effects Assessments and other resource assessments
  - The results of natural resource monitoring (FREPP, MRVA)
  - Natural disturbance and forest health factors
  - Wildfire hazard assessments
  - Projected climate change influences on forest ecosystems

This evidence is not to be considered as required plan content, but it is expected to accompany the FSP submission, or to be available upon request or at hearings in support of FSP adjudication.

### **2.4 First Nations, other rights holders and the public.**

Forest licensees and BC Timber Sales are encouraged to collaborate in developing a consolidated spatial forestry operational planning and road access management product to be employed as a platform for engagement with First Nations and natural resource stakeholders. Spatially explicit planning products should, at a minimum, identify proposed harvest and road management

activities for at least 3 years into the future. License and BC Timber Sales collaboration in a consolidated plan product is important so that parties to engagement can consider the full extent of timber development that multiple licensees may carry out on a common land base.

These products, which are not expected to be part of FSP submissions, should be available to decision makers or their staff upon request. These products should be updated annually to support sustained information sharing with First Nations and stakeholders. Such informed dialogue will be essential to building clear understanding of the trajectory of forest development across regional landscape units considering the current and forecast (post-harvest) conditions of natural resource values.

#### **2.4.1 Collaboration with First Nations**

Our federal constitution requires the protection of aboriginal rights. Core components of processes employed to ensure protection of aboriginal rights include information sharing and consultation. In order to effectively share information about forestry operational plans and to garner specific inputs to support preparation of proposed FSPs, the holders of forest licenses are expected to develop collaborative working relationships with First Nations. Deliberate attention to information sharing substantively assists the ministry's consultative engagement enterprise which must be carried out before an FSP can be considered by decision makers.

We expect that FSP submissions will include comprehensive descriptions of initiatives undertaken to collaborate with First Nations. A summary of inputs compiled during First Nations collaboration, which lists identified issues, will be required as FSP content to be accompanied by a reasonably detailed description of measures applied to address identified issues, or explanation of why certain issues were not addressed.

Where it is proposed that resolution of specific cut block or road operational planning issues will occur after an FSP is approved, and during development of timber sale licenses, cutting permit or road permit submissions, detailed commitments in respect of sustained collaboration with First Nations will be required as FSP content.

In those occasions where First Nations may not be able to or choose not to collaborate with the holder of a forest license or with BC Timber Sales, the licensee or timber sales unit must reflect on their operational experiences in the planning area. That experience must be employed to forecast the suite of issues that would be expected from First Nations, and to inform solutions for each forecast issue. Given the wealth of information that has been compiled in respect of First Nations interests in forest resource stewardship, it will not be acceptable to simply state that response from a First Nation was not received.

#### **2.4.2 Consultation with holders of government granted tenures**

Persons or parties who hold government granted tenures to use land and natural resources hold other rights which may be impacted by forestry activities. The undersigned decision makers expect the holders of forest licenses and BC Timber Sales to undertake deliberate consultative engagement with these other rights holders. To be consistent with expectations of the

undersigned decision makers, undertaking consultative engagement with other rights holders will require more than just media advertisements.

We expect that FSP submissions will include comprehensive descriptions of initiatives undertaken to engage with these other rights holders. A summary of inputs compiled during engagement, which lists identified issues, will be required as FSP content to be accompanied by a reasonably detailed description of measures applied to address identified issues, or explanation of why certain issues were not addressed.

Where it is proposed that resolution of specific cut block or road operational planning issues will occur after an FSP is approved and during development of timber sales, cutting permit or road permit submissions, detailed commitments in respect of sustained engagement with these other rights holders will be required as FSP content.

In those occasions where a holder of other rights may not be able to or choose not to collaborate with the holder of a forest license or with BC Timber Sales, the licensee must reflect on their operational experiences in the planning area in respect of the type of rights held by the non-responsive person or party. What has the licensee heard before from the other rights holders? That experience must be employed to forecast the suite of issues that would be expected, and to inform solutions for each forecast issue. What would be the licensee's response to these issues and concerns? It will not be acceptable to simply state that response from a holder of other rights was not received.

#### **2.4.3 Public engagement, with persons or parties that do not hold constitutional or government granted rights**

FSP submissions are expected to describe measures taken to engage the general public, summarise issues arising from public engagement, and describe measures to address each identified issue, or explain why specific issues have not been addressed.

#### **2.5 Dry Belt fir ecosystems**

During the period of dead pine salvage, minimal timber harvest activity was carried out in the un-even aged dry belt fir ecosystems in the Cariboo Region. The focus on even-aged salvage systems for most of the past two decades requires our collective community of practice to re-orient to planning, prescriptions and practices, and the partial-cut silviculture systems required to address the special forest resource stewardship and silviculture challenges typical of dry belt fir ecosystems.

The undersigned delegated decision makers expect to engage with forest professionals to review standards applicable to management of dry belt fir ecosystems, preferably before forest professionals commence development of replacement FSPs. Core elements of the dry belt fir standards will be applicable to plan content including but not limited to FSP requirements respecting stocking standards, cut block size/adjacency and stand level retention.

The undersigned decision makers expect that dry belt fir stands will be managed to maintain the existing structures and tree species composition of stands. Dry belt fir management will maintain the representation of Douglas fir across the region's dry belt fir ecosystems. We expect to enhance dry belt fir stands on regional landscapes for timber production, wildlife habitat, forest health, fire resiliency, forage production and range use. Stocking standards for dry belt fir stands must be consistent with these expectations.

## **2.6 Specific considerations respecting the transition to green timber profiles**

Harvest planning and practice in the Cariboo Region over the past 15 years has been heavily focussed on the salvage of dead pine. It is expected that the majority of the economically available pine salvage stands will have been harvested or will be planned for harvest within the 5 year term of replacement FSPs.

FRPA and regional land use policy has provided significant flexibility in forestry operational planning and selection of practices. Legislated provisions for green-up/adjacency, maximum cut block size, seral representation, and the temporal/spatial distribution of cut blocks were relaxed to facilitate a timber salvage imperative.

Many landscapes of the region have been heavily harvested under increased AAC, relaxed practice standards, and accelerated dead pine salvage. The rate, distributional intensity and broad geographic extent of dead pine salvaging has resulted in cumulative impacts on First Nations interests, other tenure holders, and non-timber resource values. Substantive concerns respecting forest resource stewardship are rising. As timber harvesting shifts to green timber profiles, forestry planning and practices are expected to re-align with legislative and land use provisions applicable to green timber harvesting.

It is increasingly likely that stands in pine type ecosystems will be comprised of vigorous secondary stand structure that will soon be predominate throughout such stands. This secondary stand structure represents a substantive contribution to mid-term timber supply, which should not be compromised by short term revisions to criteria defining stands eligible for dead pine salvage.

The undersigned decision makers expect to review salvage criteria with forest licensees, BC Timber Sales and their professionals, to inform the content of replacement FSPs. Forest licensees and BC Timber Sales should expect correspondence from us that will provide explanation about which stand conditions will qualify as timber salvage opportunities for the purposes of receiving the requisite legislated practice and land use policy exemptions.

A higher standard of salvage criteria will apply in landscape units where previous timber harvesting is at material risk of compromising land use policy thresholds, such as the Mature plus Old seral representation target. Professionals preparing plan content for stand level biodiversity are expected to reflect on Chief Forester direction about stand level retention during salvage harvesting.

As a result of these circumstances, the content of replacement FSPs:

- must, in relation to any anticipated salvage harvesting, be revised to reflect an appropriate definition of “salvage”, to be determined in dialogue with the undersigned decision makers;
- must clearly differentiate the approach that will be taken in managing the “salvage” profile versus the green timber profiles; and
- must clearly reflect on the non-salvage application of regulatory requirements for green-up, maximum cut block size and seral stage distribution.

Drawdown of the Mature component of the M+O Seral Targets must be consistent with the requirements outlined in the CCLUP Biodiversity Strategy Update #8, to the extent that this update is determined by the undersigned decision makers as relevant to timber salvage while the harvesting focus changes to green timber profiles.

## **2.7 Cumulative Effects Assessment**

The undersigned delegated decision makers remind the qualified professionals who will contribute to preparation of replacement FSPs that the Cariboo Region has made the results of cumulative effects assessments for 6 resource values widely available: grizzly bear, moose, marten, hydrology, mule deer and biodiversity. These assessments provide important information that is relevant to forestry planning, in particular, identification of risks to the resource values, and the factors that are driving those risks.

We are aware that First Nations and other rights holders will raise concerns respecting cumulative effects given the current state of some forested landscapes in the Cariboo Region. It is expected that replacement FSPs and accompanying evidentiary documentation will reflect consideration of cumulative effect assessments and will describe measures to address risks should timber harvesting operations be considered in identified risk areas. Professionals preparing plans should consider that cumulative effects assessments are subject to update. Landscape units that are near risk thresholds will likely have changed due to additional development, forest recruitment or application of risk mitigation measures.

## **2.8 Roads and access management**

Dialogue with First Nations and other right holders, examination by the Forest Practices Board (April 2015) and the results of cumulative effects assessments have revealed that the density of active forest resource roads and management of the access horizons created by such roads requires special management attention in all three Natural Resource Districts. For example, recovery of moose populations will require reduced active road densities in order to maintain the supply of suitable moose habitat and effective use of that habitat. Management of road densities delivers outcomes that can materially influence human caused mortality of moose, which has direct consequences for moose recovery. Roads and access structures cause material impacts on the productivity and hydrologic function of the soils upon which our forests depend. It is expected that FSP content in respect of the soils objective (FPPR 5) will reflect appropriate management of road and access structures in light of their impact on soils.



The CCLUP established road and access objectives applicable to each resource management zone of the region, yet management initiative to realise these targets is not yet sufficiently visible in forestry operational plans. The undersigned delegated decision makers expect replacement FSPs to address road and access management objectives and related access issues that will be raised through engagement with First Nations and other rights holders.

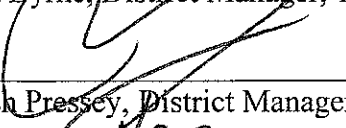
## Conclusion

This advisory is the initial step in building the critical lines of communication to inform preparation and adjudication of replacement FSPs, and to continuously improve forest resource stewardship in the Cariboo Region. All forest licensees, BC Timber Sales and our region's community of qualified professionals are expected to engage in and contribute to this essential dialogue.




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Pat Byrne, District Manager, 100 Mile House Natural Resource District



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Josh Pressey, District Manager, Quesnel Natural Resource District



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Harold Stolar, A/District Manager, Cariboo Chilcotin Natural Resource District

## Attachments:

- Letter dated and March 8, 2016, signed by Minister S. Thomson, respecting Chief Forester guidance on replacement forest stewardship plans.
- Guidance on Replacement of Forest Stewardship Plans. March 2016. Chief Forester.

## Documents cited:

Forest Practices Board. August 2015. Forest Stewardship Plans: Are They Meeting Public Expectations? Special Investigation

Forest Practices Board. April 2015. Access Management and Resource Roads. Special Report

Forest Practices Board. May 2014. A Decade in Review: Observations on Regulation of Forest and Range Practices in British Columbia. Special Report

Forest Practices Board. July 2013. Public involvement in Forest Management Planning in BC. Board Bulletin, Volume 15.

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Morris, M. August 2015. Getting the Balance Right: Improving Wildlife Habitat Management in British Columbia. Strategic advice to the Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations.