

Ref: 274279

June 28, 2023

VIA EMAIL

To: All District Managers
All Regional Executive Directors
Allan Powelson, Executive Director, BC Timber Sales

From: Shane Berg, Assistant Deputy Minister, Chief Forester

Re: Update to Guidance on the Replacement of Forest Stewardship Plans (2016)

In 2016, the chief forester released guidance to inform decisions regarding the replacement and extension of forest stewardship plans (FSP) by the Minister's delegated decision-makers (DDMs) under the *Forest and Range Practices Act* (FRPA).

The purpose of the 2016 guidance was to help:

1. Address the issues identified by government and the Forest Practices Board regarding FSP quality and effectiveness, and
2. Bring provincial consistency and fairness to the management of FSP expiries.

This guidance recommended replacement of existing FSPs upon expiry and clarified that extensions to the term of an expiring, or recently expired, FSP should be temporary. Such extensions are intended to provide additional time for comprehensive planning of a new replacement FSP and should therefore be kept short.

Since March of 2016, there has been a considerable shift in policy, regulation, and engagement processes under FRPA. Key policy changes such as the Old Growth Strategic Review, the Modernization of Forest Sector Policy, and the Together for Wildlife initiative, coupled with more in-depth Indigenous engagement, guided by the provincial *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, have added new perspectives to operational planning. Introduction of the *Forest and Range Practices Amendment Act* (Bill 21-2019) and the *Forests Statutes Amendment Act* (Bill 23-2021) has set the foundation for a new collaborative planning regime that will increase the diversity of voices and perspectives on forest management in BC.

The impact of these recent changes should be considered when implementing the direction given in the 2016 guidance. Replacing, rather than extending, an expiring FSP still provides a better opportunity to incorporate new policy and support more meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities and the public.

Before making a decision to extend an FSP, DDMs should carefully consider the local circumstances applicable to the plan area. Insights gained through engagement with Indigenous communities are particularly important and should be given due consideration in advance of any FSP extension decision. In some instances, operational flexibility through FSP extension may facilitate a more seamless transition to Forest Landscape Planning, where such a forum is underway. However, the term of the extension should reflect the risks associated with continuing an existing FSP. Since extensions might not address new policies and objectives, to the extent a replacement FSP would, amendments to align an extended FSP with current provisions should be considered at the time of extension.

As outlined in 2016, a Plan Holder has the right to request an extension to the term of their FSP. If they exercise this right, the DDM should, in turn, exercise their obligation to review all content in the existing FSP, and may use discretion under section 28 of the Forest Planning and Practices Regulation to deny, or approve, an extension.

Questions regarding the interpretation of this guidance can be directed to the Sustainable Forest Management Team at the Forest Science, Planning and Practices Branch, Office of the Chief Forester at Forests.ForestPracticesBranchOffice@gov.bc.ca.

Shane Berg, RPF
Assistant Deputy Minister, Chief Forester

Attachment(s): [**Guidance on the Replacement of Forest Stewardship Plans \(2016\)**](#)

pc: Rick Manwaring, Deputy Minister, Forests
FOR Executive Committee
David Muter, ADM, Land Use Policy, Planning and Ecosystems Division, WLRS
Chris Cooper, Director, Range Branch
Doug Kelly, Director, Forest Tenures Branch
Brad Faucett, Director, Compliance and Enforcement Branch
Ariel Taylor, Executive Director, Indigenous Relations Branch
All Members, Provincial Forestry Forum (c/o Rachael Pollard)
All Members, Resource Stewardship and Tenures Committee (c/o Doug Kelly)