

**Chief Forester Order  
Respecting the AAC Determination for  
the Cassiar Timber Supply Area**

Section 8 (3.1) of the *Forest Act* stipulates in part that:

*If ... the chief forester considers that the allowable annual cut... is not likely to be changed significantly with a new determination, then...the chief forester by written order may postpone the next determination...to a date that is up to 10 years after the date of the relevant last determination, and must give written reasons for the postponement.*

On November 7, 2001, British Columbia's chief forester determined a new allowable annual cut (AAC) for the Cassiar Timber Supply Area (TSA). The current AAC of 305,000 cubic metres came into effect on January 1, 2002. In making his determination, the chief forester also specified the AAC as attributable to the following areas:

- Iskut and Boundary supply block – 120,000 cubic metres
- Dease - Liard supply block – 153,000 cubic metres
- Atlin supply block – 32,000 cubic metres

In considering whether to postpone the next AAC for the Cassiar TSA, I have reviewed:

- Each of the factors potentially affecting timber supply on the TSA;
- The previous *Rationale for AAC Determination* dated November 2001;
- The *Cassiar Timber Supply Area Analysis Report* dated March 2001;
- A summary of consultation with First Nations prepared by Skeena-Stikine Forest District staff dated July 24, 2008.

In reviewing each factor, I have also discussed current practice, recent harvesting performance and the availability of new information with Ministry of Forest and Range (MFR) district, region and branch specialists.

I note that the timber supply forecast reported in the 2001 analysis report projected an even-flow harvest forecast of 400,000 cubic metres throughout the entire planning horizon. I also reviewed a projection of the harvest contribution by supply block as well as two alternative harvest forecasts that were provided in the 2001 analysis. These forecasts indicate that there is considerable flexibility in the initial harvest level without impacting long-term timber supply.

In reviewing each factor specified under Section 8 of the *Forest Act*, I investigated whether any new information exists that may affect timber supply and the harvest projections described in the 2001 analysis report. I am aware of the following:

- Because of poor markets and capacity-related factors, there has been a significant undercut of the current AAC on the Cassiar TSA during the past five years. Skeena Stikine Forest District staff provided information for the 2001-2006 period which indicated that the total undercut volume from 2001-2006 is approximately 1,459,000 cubic metres, or 4.8 years of current AAC. In other words, the actual harvest over this

five-year period represents about 0.2 years of the current AAC.

- The *Dease-Liard Sustainable Resource Management Plan* was completed in November 2004, after the last AAC determination. I note that subsequent analysis suggests that there is likely a long-term timber supply impact associated with the Dease-Liard supply block. However, because of the significant undercut in the TSA described above and the fact that no volume has yet been apportioned to the Dease-Liard supply block, I consider that there is minimal risk to the sustainability of the management unit over the next five-year period.
- The Province and the Taku River Tlingit First Nation have recently initiated a joint land use planning process in the Atlin Taku region of the Cassiar TSA. As a first step toward the expected outcomes of the plan, the Province has implemented Interim Measures that maintain important cultural and ecological areas while planning is underway. The Interim Measures include 'No Commercial Forest Harvesting Zones' along the Taku River and over key caribou wintering habitat. Although the potential impact to timber supply of these interim measures has not been fully assessed, I note that volume apportionment for the Atlin supply block is very low and cultural and ecological values are unlikely to be placed at risk by postponing the AAC decision. Should the land use plan be completed and approved prior to November 2011, the potential timber supply implications can be considered in the next AAC determination.
- The Province implemented new log grades for the BC Interior on April 1, 2006. Staff from the Forest Analysis and Inventory Branch, have advised me that the timber supply projected in the previous analysis may be underestimated by about 10 percent when dead potential is factored into the inventory.

I am aware of the Province's legal obligation to consult with First Nations on proposed forest management decisions. I have reviewed the information through the First Nations consultation that was undertaken by MFR staff with those First Nations whose asserted traditional territories overlap with the Cassiar TSA. I note that:

- The First Nations and tribal councils in the Cassiar TSA include: Tahltan Band, Tahltan Central Council, Daylu-Dena Council, Dease River First Nation, Kaska Dena Council, Kaska Tribal Council, Taku River Tlingit First Nations, Teslin Tlingit Council, Carcross Tagish First Nation, and Champagne and Aishihik First Nations.
- Kaska and Taku River Tlingit have signed Forest and Range Agreements but at the time of the consultation process neither had a final consultation protocol concluded.
- MFR sent letters dated March 18, 2008 to each First Nation requesting information about how their aboriginal interests may be impacted by postponing the AAC determination for the Cassiar TSA.
- MFR District staff subsequently met with representatives of the Carcross Tagish First Nation; Taku River Tlingit First Nation; Teslin Tlingit Council; Dease River (Kaska) First Nation; Tahltan Band and Tahltan Central Council on April 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24 respectively.
- During these meetings concerns expressed related to past logging and reforestation practices; management of invasive plants; caribou habitat; proposed heli-skiing operations; access to fibre; stumpage rates; tenure; mountain pine beetle salvage; mining, oil and gas exploration; community wildfire protection plans; tourism opportunities and seasonal fishing and hunting.
- District staff agreed to finalize the consultation protocol matrix with the Taku River Tlingit and decided on acceptable forest practices proposed in their Notation of Interest areas. MFR also agreed to send digital files of future licenses to cuts to the TRT. MFR

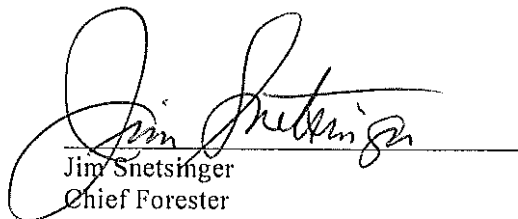
also agreed to review past harvest areas with the TRT in the field to check seedling regeneration and assess any clean up issues.

- MFR provided contact information to the Dease River First Nation so that they could pursue funding and direction to initiate a Community Wildfire Protection Plan for their communities.
- MFR brought forward recreational and trail development concerns on behalf of the Tahltan First Nations to the attention of the Ministry of Tourism, Sports and the Arts.
- MFR Skeena Stikine District is working on developing domestic use guidelines for First Nations access to firewood.

After reviewing the information, I am satisfied that the First Nations whose asserted traditional territories overlap with the Cassiar TSA were consulted on the postponement of the AAC determination. I have considered their concerns in my decision, and I note that district staff will continue to be available to consult with First Nations on specific operational planning issues. If however, any new information does arise, then I will consider it in the next AAC determination.

In summary, based on my review of the factors discussed in the 2001 AAC rationale; the limited new data available; the very limited harvesting performance over the past 5 years; the results of the First Nations consultation process; and my knowledge of the timber supply dynamics of the management unit, I have determined that the AAC for the Cassiar TSA is unlikely change with a new determination made according to the existing schedule.

Therefore, under my authority as outlined in Section 8(3.1) of the Forest Act, I hereby postpone the next AAC determination to a date prior to November 7, 2011 which is 10 years since the last determination. Should additional significant new information be made available to me or if major changes in management assumptions occur, then I am prepared to revisit the next determination at an earlier date.

  
Jim Snetsinger  
Chief Forester

Aug 12/08  
Date