FOREST INVESTMENT PROGRAM

Access Management Standards

June 2026

BRITISH COLUMBIA | Ministry of Forests

OVERVIEW

This document contains the standards that must be followed for all access for silviculture operations funded under the Forest Investment Program (FIP). This document is in addition to the Forest Investment Program General Standards.

Contents

For more information, scan the QR code or check out the FIP Website.

1 Definitions and interpretation

Definitions

1.1 In this document, these words have the following meanings:

"coordinating registered professional" or "CRP" means a person who is either a registered professional engineer (with Engineers and Geoscientists BC) or a registered forest professional (with Forest Professionals BC), that has the education and experience to lead road planning, maintenance, upgrade and deactivation work.

"discontinue and close" means a formal notification by the B.C. Ministry of Forests (FOR) that the ministry no longer administers a road as a forest service road, in accordance with section 121 (9) of the Forest Act.

"non-status road" means an existing road on Crown land that is not being used under any authorization by a government agency.

"silviculture road rehabilitation" means restoring the growing capacity of degraded forest land on an existing road section that has been deactivated; typically, silviculture rehabilitation may include activities such as soil decompaction, replacement of topsoil and other processes to facilitate regeneration.

"road deactivation" means placing a road in a self-maintaining state that is expected to protect adjacent resources, as required under section 82(1) of the Forest Planning and Practices Regulation (FPPR).

"road permit" is a permit issued under section 115 of the Forest Act to authorize road construction and maintenance by someone who has a right to harvest timber.

"road upgrade" means work carried out on an existing road to improve the safety, structural capacity, functionality or performance to provide safe and timely access.

"road use permit" is a permit issued to an industrial user under section 119.5 of the Forest Act to authorize use of a forest service road.

"road prism" means an area consisting of the road surface and any cut slope and road fill as defined in the Forest Planning and Practices Regulation.

"road tenure" means those licenses or permits issued by FOR under the Forest Act to authorize the holder to construct and use roads, and includes road permits, road use permits, cutting permits and various timber harvesting licenses.

"special use permit" means a permit issued by FOR under the Provincial Forest Use Regulation for road construction and use by non-forest users.

"wilderness road" as referred to under section 81 of the Forest Planning and Practices Regulation.

1.2. Terms not defined in this document are as defined in the Forest Investment Program General Standards.

2 FIP access management

General

2.1 Access to FIP silviculture operations requires safe, cost effective and environmentally sound access roads or road networks, developed with proper consideration of information sharing with First Nations and stakeholders.
Key elements in ensuring a successful access project include:

- suitable access planning, operational planning and field assessments well in advance of field operations;
- all required authorizations and permits for necessary works are obtained prior to the commencement of any works;
- assignment of professional responsibilities for assessments, prescriptions and oversight of implementation of road works;
- utilization of appropriately skilled personnel to carry out road activities, including road upgrade, maintenance and deactivation;
- deactivation of non-status roads once planting has concluded and the application of appropriate levels of inspections and maintenance until that time.

2.2 As part of the overall project plan, the delivery partner must determine the location and extent of existing road access to the work areas. Primary silviculture activities will typically require 4-wheel drive; however, this requirement may depend on the size and location of the work areas. Site-specific conditions must be evaluated to determine the most practical and efficient access strategy.

Shared benefits

2.3 Access management activities can significantly increase project costs. To support efficient program delivery and promote cost-saving measures, opportunities to share access-related costs with complementary projects should be considered. Leveraging additional funding sources can enhance project outcomes and maximize shared benefits. Delivery partners must consult with and be aware of any other work being done in the area that is not funded by FIP to promote alignment of efforts.

3 Project administration

Information sharing

3.1 During the planning stage, delivery partners must carry out information sharing regarding all proposed activities across the project life cycle, including but not limited to tree planting, forest nutrient management, overstory removal and associated access management, with relevant stakeholders and road tenure holders. Stakeholders may include the following, but are not limited to, ranchers, guide outfitters, trappers, mineral tenure holders, forest licence holders and recreational groups. The feedback received through this process shall be documented and considered when determining eligibility. A road may be deemed ineligible for

deactivation if information sharing identifies material concerns that require the road to be maintained.

District engagement

3.2 The delivery partner will provide access road maps to district engineering staff as early as practicable, identifying roads intended for use, the duration of use and detailing any required work on forest service roads or non-status roads. Additional requirements may be specified by the district engineering staff.

4 All-terrain vehicle trails and temporary structures

4.1 All-terrain vehicle (ATV) trails may be established within a work area to facilitate the transport of seedlings when conventional vehicle access is not practicable. Trail development must minimize soil disturbance and erosion while safely accommodating the transport of seedlings and planting crews, considering slope, soil stability and seasonal conditions.

4.2 Where no alternative route is possible, trails that pass over wet, organic soil or streams will require temporary structures to minimize soil disturbance and impacts to riparian areas. Temporary structures are to be placed outside of the stream channel and streambed and must be fully removed once primary silviculture activities are complete.

5 Road administration and responsibilities

5.1 If an access road is an existing forest service road (FSR) with no road use permit holder and no harvesting is required:

- Neither a Road Use Permit (RUP) nor an exemption letter is required as delivery partners conduct activities on behalf of the ministry with funding provided under a vote.
- The delivery partner will carry out road maintenance and/or upgrade to a standard that will enable the project work to be carried out safely and to address environmental issues.
- If the road is to be deactivated following the completion of the project, the delivery partner will follow local access planning processes, deactivate the road and notify the District Manager. FOR will then discontinue and close the road, under Forest Act 121 (9).

5.2 If a Forestry License to Cut (FLTC) holder requires the construction, use or maintenance of an FSR:

- They must obtain a RUP in accordance with Forest Act section 119.5. An exemption may be granted under the Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA) section 22.1 upon request; the District Manager may include conditions in the exemption.

5.3 If an FLTC holder requires the construction, use or maintenance of a non-status road:

- They must obtain a road permit in accordance with Forest Act section 115. An exemption may be granted under FRPA section 22.11 upon request; the District Manager may include conditions in the exemption.

5.4 If an access road is an existing FSR with an RUP holder in place who is responsible for carrying out the road maintenance:

- Typically, no road work will be carried out by the delivery partner; for such roads, a delivery partner must enter into a road use agreement with the RUP holder regarding such work in accordance with the approved plans, as well as joint road use and safety issues.
- If a road use agreement cannot be reached with the road use permit holder, the District Manager may consider assigning the maintenance responsibilities to the delivery partner for the duration of the delivery partner's activities.

5.5 If an access road is an existing road within an area under license, cutting permit, road permit or special use permit (SUP):

- The delivery partner is not responsible for the maintenance and/or upgrade work; they must enter into a road use agreement with the license/permit holder regarding such work in accordance with the approved plans, as well as joint road use and safety issues.

5.6 If an access road is an existing non-status road and no harvesting is required:

- A road permit is not required as delivery partners are conducting activities on behalf of the ministry.
- For roads that will remain in use for forest management purposes after the completion of the FIP project, the District Manager may either establish the road as an FSR or issue a road permit to a tenure holder with an interest in maintaining ongoing use of the road.
- If the road is to be deactivated following the completion of the project, the delivery partner will follow local access planning processes, deactivate the road and notify the District Manager. FOR will then discontinue and close the road.

6 Professional responsibilities

General

6.1 The coordinating registered professional (CRP) will be required to take professional responsibility for the oversight, planning and coordination of all professional work associated with the road activities over its entire life cycle. The road activity professional of record (POR) takes the professional responsibility for the design and field review components of road activities directed by the CRP. Work must be done in accordance with applicable legislation, regulations and professional practice requirements and the Engineering Manual.

For simple roads, the CRP may also act as the POR. Professional assurance statements are required to be completed either by the CRP or the POR. For any roads identified as suitable for silviculture rehabilitation, a qualified forest professional must prepare a silviculture prescription. Silviculture prescriptions must address site preparation and planting requirements. Complex road activities may require additional specialists. Refer to the Professional Roles and Responsibilities for the Life Cycle of Forest Roads and Professional Services in the Forest Sector: Forest Roads.

7 Road works

Road inspection

7.1 The recipient is responsible for ensuring that a detailed road inspection is conducted on roads that are anticipated to provide access to the FIP project. Inspection records must document key road elements and identify any deficiencies. Where road work is required, supporting information, including photographs, GPS coordinates and descriptive notes, will be required. Projects with significant road works and high costs may result in seeking alternative access options, such as helicopter or ATV access. In cases where alternative access is not feasible and costs are prohibitive, the project may be deemed too costly to proceed.

Road upgrade and maintenance

7.2 Based on the road inspection, plans may include surface or structural maintenance activities to improve the condition of access. Activities must align with the proposed lifespan of the road. In addition to the road maintenance requirements outlined in Forest Planning and Practices Regulation 79 (6), maintenance and upgrade work will:

- provide the delivery partner with timely machinery and vehicle access;
- meet safety requirements associated with the implementation of project operations, which include the use of equipment, service and crew vehicles supporting the delivery partner's operations;
- limit the transport of sediment from the road and its effects on other forest resources; and
- ensure safe passage for fish is provided at stream crossings.

In accordance with plans, any work required to provide access will be completed. Work will be consistent with the standards and best management practices outlined in the Engineering Manual.

7.3 Table 1. The following table outlines common maintenance activities associated with roads and road infrastructure and references to the relevant sections of the Engineering Manual for detailed standards and best management practices. Other sections may be applicable and should be consulted as required.

Associated road infrastructure	Engineering Manual Section
Signs	6.5.5
Fords	6.5.6
Cattleguards	6.5.7
Weirs	6.5.8
Fences	6.5.9
Structural Maintenance of Bridges	6.7.1.1
Surface Maintenance of Bridges	6.7.1.2
Stream Culvert Maintenance	6.7.2
Surface Water Runoff	9.1.4

7.4 At a minimum, the recipient must notify any affected water licensees or a water purveyor in a community watershed 48 hours before any road construction.

Brushing

7.5 Brushing is to be minimized and carried out only when one or more of the following conditions occur:

- The sight distance and/or the usable road width are dangerously impeded or reduced
- The usable road width is dangerously reduced to the point that vehicles cannot safely pass each other at road widenings or turnouts.
- Drainage systems are functioning below acceptable levels, where roadside vegetation is a major contributing factor.
- Vegetation interferes with helicopter access.

7.6 Where operationally and economically feasible, residue after brushing may be removed and utilized (e.g., OSB, pulp or bioenergy). Otherwise, where feasible, residue may be treated on site (e.g., chipping and spreading) where significant volumes are present. Small amounts of residue may be left on site where they do not pose a fire hazard.

Ditch maintenance

7.7 Ditches will be maintained to ensure unobstructed flow of water to reduce the risk of road washouts or landslides.

Ditch maintenance may include the following:

- Remove debris, rock falls and slumped material while preserving grass or low vegetation to reduce erosion.
- Keep ditch elevation below the road subgrade and maintain a continuous gradient for drainage.
- Prevent standing water in ditches to avoid subgrade saturation, which can result in surface rutting.
- Avoid undermining slopes, cutbanks, shoulders, or culvert basins during cleaning.
- Dispose of unsuitable excavated material at designated spoil sites.
- Ensure visibility and access to maintenance equipment; remove tall vegetation as needed.

Road subgrade

7.8 Road subgrade restoration is necessary to ensure the road system performs as designed until deactivation. Suitable measures, depending on the remaining life of the road, may include:

- Stabilizing cut and fill slopes and repairing minor scours and washouts.
- Removing loose rocks, stumps or other unstable materials that pose hazards to road users.
- Cleaning up slides, slumps and rock falls and stabilizing sites where hazards are evident. (If materials generated by this work cannot be reused or sidecast on site, they must be removed and disposed of at designated sites.)
- Correcting potential failures of approach fills at stream crossings.

For roads that will remain in service beyond FIP silviculture operations, additional measures may include:

- Repairing chronic soft subgrade areas and problematic frost sections by excavating and replacing weak soils with suitable granular material, using geosynthetics where appropriate. If material is brought in from a gravel pit, the appropriate permission must be obtained from the applicable SUP holder.
- Replacing or repairing the running surface where chronic ruts, potholes or broken surfaces prevent the road from supporting design loads.
- Relocating the road, which may require an approved layout and design.

Any work to be undertaken beyond what is required to fulfill FIP silviculture operations will require a cost-benefit analysis and a supporting business case.

Road works shutdown criteria

7.9 Road operations, including vehicle travel and hauling, must be shut down or modified during adverse weather or soil conditions to prevent environmental damage such as erosion, sediment transport or slope failure. Traffic is not to resume until the road is able to support vehicle loads and sedimentation has been abated. Refer to Section 5.12 Road Works Shutdown Indicators of the Engineering Manual.

8 Project completion: Access road management

General

8.1 Upon the completion of a project or project phase, access roads or road networks must be considered for deactivation, maintained as a wilderness road during periods of inactivity or restored to a condition similar to its original state if remained in use. This will be based on the district's determination of future needs for the roads.

Wilderness road

8.2 For access roads maintained by the delivery partner that will be left as wilderness roads once FIP silviculture operations are completed, discuss with the future responsibility holder regarding the deactivation of structures. Cross ditches and water bars will be constructed if structures are to be removed, along with any other measures required to provide environmental protection while the road is a wilderness road. The responsibility for ongoing road inspections and maintenance will then be transferred to the district, timber sales office or licensee, as applicable.

Final surface treatment

8.3 At the conclusion of the FIP silviculture operations, for those access roads that will be required for continuing access by others, the delivery partner must return the road to a state that is atleast equivalent to when the delivery partner commenced work. The delivery partners' work will generally consist of a final grading together and ensuring that the drainage structures and ditches are functional.

Deactivated road

8.4 For access roads maintained by the delivery partner that will not be required once project operations are complete, the delivery partner will deactivate the road. These roads are to be considered for silviculture rehabilitation if the silviculture road rehabilitation criteria are met.

9 Road deactivation

General

9.1 The intent of road deactivation is to place a road in a self-maintaining state that will protect adjacent resources at risk. Road deactivation requirements typically include removing bridges and stream culverts, stabilizing the road prism and barricading the road surface width in a clearly visible manner to prevent access by motor vehicles (other than all-terrain vehicles). Refer to Section 7 Road Deactivation of the Engineering Manual. Deactivation and restoration techniques will follow the Best Management Practices Handbook: Hillslope Restoration in British Columbia unless otherwise determined by a professional.

The decision to deactivate FSRs is made by the District Manager, who identifies the roads as being candidates for road deactivation because there is no future use required or to reduce risk or the cost of deactivating plus eventually reactivating these roads is less than the cost of carrying out maintenance to a wilderness road level of maintenance over the period of expected closure.

Deactivation plan

9.2 Deactivation work must be carried out in accordance with the CRP's deactivation plan. A deactivation plan must be consistent with the requirements outlined in Section 82(1) of the Forest Planning and Practices Regulation and outlined in 7.4.1 Prescription Requirements of the Engineering Manual.

9.3 At a minimum, the recipient must notify any affected water licensees or a water purveyor in a community watershed 48 hours before deactivation.

Deactivation warning signs

9.4 Warning signs must be erected during the period of road deactivation activities. Before the activities begin, hazard-warning signs will be installed at appropriate locations to warn potential users of the road of the hazards that can be expected on the whole road or at a particular location.

Grass and legume seeding

9.5 Only in areas where surface soil erosion and sediment transport are likely to occur without seeding, exposed soils that will support vegetation must be seeded. Seeding will only be undertaken if no silviculture road rehabilitation is planned for the site. Seeding will be undertaken in the first growing season and must be completed within two years after deactivation. Seed must be weed-free and ecologically appropriate to the area.

10 Silviculture road rehabilitation

General

10.1 Silviculture road rehabilitation is to be considered for all non-tenured roads prior to deactivation to allow for efficient operational planning to be done in conjunction with road deactivation.