

Old Growth Management Area Guidance
Thompson Okanagan

Integrated Land Management Bureau
Thompson Okanagan Service Centre
Southern Interior Region

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Intent of this document

This document is intended to serve as guidance for managing areas identified as contributing to old growth and biodiversity objectives within the Kamloops, Okanagan, Merritt and Lillooet timber supply areas. Where non-legal spatially identified old growth management areas (OGMAs) are used to achieve old growth retention goals, it is appropriate to provide operational flexibility while assuring that the overall effectiveness of old forest conservation and biodiversity in the area is not diminished.

This document identifies a permissible amount of disturbance that can occur within an OGMA without losing significant old growth and biodiversity values and suggests the conditions under which this can occur. This document also proposes situations when it may be appropriate to have replacement areas identified and outlines criteria for such areas.

Reasons why harvesting might occur in an OGMA

Notwithstanding that the overall goal is to retain original OGMAs as much as possible, there are circumstances where harvesting might be justifiable and the location of OGMAs may be amended. These include:

- changing the boundary to improve OGMA and timber management or to better reflect logical, on the ground boundaries (e.g., use physical features such as roads, streams, old block boundaries or timber types);
- improving harvest boundary alignment in a way that will contribute to the maintenance of the OGMA (e.g., to secure a more wind-firm boundary);
- shifting the location of the contiguous area of the OGMA to improve the retention of old forest attributes as identified through a field assessment;
- relocating the OGMA to capture old growth and/or biodiversity values better (e.g., where old seral or biodiversity values outside of an OGMA are found to exceed old seral or biodiversity values inside);
- where there exists a compelling rationale to harvest and the incursion is minimal or an ecologically equivalent (equal or better old seral and biodiversity values) replacement opportunity exists; and,
- where the incursion is significant, but there exists a compelling rationale and activities demonstrate reasonable consistency with the desired old seral conditions and will maintain biodiversity values.

What to consider prior to harvesting in an OGMA

To ensure that the overall effectiveness of old forest conservation and biodiversity is not diminished, ILMB recommends that the following best practices be considered prior to harvesting:

- minimize long-term site disturbance and/or detrimental impacts to site productivity;
- maintain, restore, or enhance old seral forest attributes;
- retain relatively old, large, live and/or dead trees, and large pieces of coarse woody debris;
- avoid compromising rare ecosystems;
- avoid compromising forest interior habitat conditions;
- where appropriate, restock openings created with climax tree species suited to the site; and,
- plan activities so the OGMA is not unnecessarily predisposed to increased risk of windthrow or forest health problems.

OGMA amendment scenarios: OGMAs are retained or replaced

1. Timber harvesting is within limited incursion thresholds – OGMA is retained

Within the mapped areas of an OGMA, up to 10 hectares or 10% of the area of the OGMA, whichever is less, may be disturbed by timber harvesting for one or more of the following purposes:

- a) to enhance or maintain an interpretive forest site, recreation site, recreation facility or recreation trail, where there are no other practicable options;
- b) to facilitate range development, maintenance and related activities where there are no other practicable options;
- c) to allow road construction and maintenance where there are no other practicable options;
- d) to manage for forest health where trees within the old growth management area pose a significant forest health risk to forests outside the old growth management area and where harvesting constitutes an appropriate and effective control action;
- e) to address a public or industrial safety hazard where no practicable alternative exists (e.g., danger tree or fire hazard);
- f) where the incursion is limited to 50 metres and the purpose is to establish a logical boundary for timber harvesting operations, and where the intent is to use physical or administrative features that will not compromise the long term management of the old growth management area; or

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- g) to improve harvest boundary alignment in a way that will contribute to the maintenance of the OGMA (e.g., to secure a more wind-firm boundary).

Activities conducted under these items should demonstrate consideration of desired old seral conditions and biodiversity values. OGMA is retained; no replacement is necessary.

2. Timber harvesting exceeds limited incursion threshold and consistency with desired old seral conditions can be demonstrated – OGMA is retained

Within the mapped area of an OGMA, timber harvesting that exceeds the limited incursion threshold may occur if a compelling rationale exists and activities can demonstrate consideration of desired old seral conditions and biodiversity values. OGMA is retained; no replacement is necessary.

Plans to selectively harvest within an OGMA in order to reduce a fire hazard would be a reasonable scenario under this item. Removing only the dead and dying trees, keeping ground disturbance to a minimum and retaining all other tree species would demonstrate consideration of the old seral conditions and biodiversity values.

3. Timber harvesting exceeds limited incursion and consistency with desired old seral conditions cannot be demonstrated – OGMA is replaced.

Within the mapped area of an OGMA, if timber harvesting exceeds a limited incursion and cannot demonstrate reasonable consistency with the desired old seral conditions and maintain biodiversity values, the forest agreement holder should identify and reserve from harvest an alternative area (or areas) as a replacement OGMA. See replacement criteria for more detail.

4. Amendment to an OGMA location where biodiversity values can be improved – OGMA is replaced

Amendments to the location of an OGMA to improve the retention of old forest attributes and biodiversity values can be made if the new location can be demonstrated as being biologically better (i.e., an improvement in location, size, age, tree species and wildlife habitat value). See replacement criteria for more detail.

For example, OGMA locations may be amended where biodiversity values and caribou habitat values (as per Kamloops Land and Resource Management Plan: Appendix 10) are maintained or improved and where timber supply impacts can be mitigated.

How to select a replacement OGMA

Replacement OGMAs should meet the replacement criteria outlined below:

- Size, shape, age, connectivity and interior habitat should approximate or be an improvement upon the original OGMA;
- Replacement OGMAs should provide equivalent biogeoclimatic representation to the subzone level as the original OGMA;
- The site units of the replacement OGMA (e.g. moist to dry, slope, aspects and tree species) should approximate the original OGMA;
- Consider present and future forest health conditions when selecting replacement areas. Avoid stands that have or are likely to have forest health problems;
- Transfers should not result in new OGMAs in areas with higher levels of human disturbance; and,
- Transfers should only be made within landscape unit or between adjacent landscape units. Overall targets across the planning area should be maintained. Distance between the original and replacement OGMA should be minimized.

Note: Original OGMAs with high wildlife habitat values, rare or uncommon forest types, and/or riparian habitat values, are not considered preferred candidates for removal.

Definitions

In this document:

- **biodiversity** is “the diversity of plants, animals and other living organisms in all their forms and levels of organization, and includes the diversity of genes, species and ecosystems, as well as the evolutionary and functional processes that link them” (*FPC Biodiversity Guidebook*, 1995).
- **desired old seral conditions** are those ecological conditions that are characteristic of old seral forests – i.e. “old seral is a forest that contains live and dead trees of various sizes, species, composition, and age class structure. Old seral forests, as part of a slowly changing but dynamic ecosystem, include climax forests but not sub-climax or mid-seral forest” (*FPC Biodiversity Guidebook*, 1995).
- **limited incursion** means up to 10 hectares or 10% of the mapped area of the OGMA, whichever is less, may be disturbed by timber harvesting over a 5 year period without the need for the identification of a replacement area. The accumulation of harvesting over a 5 year period within the same OGMA must be taken into account.
- **old growth management areas** are “areas that contain or are managed to replace specific structural old-growth attributes, and that are mapped out and treated as special management areas” (*FPC Biodiversity Guidebook*, 1995).

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- **practicable** includes consideration for being both practical and reasonably economically feasible.
- **proposed replacement old growth management areas** are those areas proposed to replace an established old growth management area and will be set aside from harvesting.
- **recreation** includes commercial and non-commercial related developments, including ski or snowmobile trails and associated infrastructure.
- **significant forest health risk** in an OGMA is where the forest health problem within the OGMA poses a significant forest health risk to forests outside the old growth management area.