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## **FOREST ROAD DEACTIVATION INFORMATION SHEET**

This document has been prepared to provide interested parties with background information about the deactivation of tenured roads on crown land within the Thompson Rivers Forest District. It is not intended to be a definitive source of information about road deactivation, nor a source of legal information.

After more than a century of industrial activities, there is an enormous & growing legacy of resource roads in British Columbia. Over 75 percent of resource roads were built by the forest industry. Forest roads are used by a variety of other users, including the public, First Nations and commercial interests such as ranching and adventure tourism.

**Road deactivation** can be defined as the application of techniques using a variety of methods to place a road in a self-maintaining state that will indefinitely protect adjacent resources and values.

### Legal Requirements

Forest roads on Crown Land are built or established under the *Forest Act* or the *Forest and Range Practices Act*. Roads constructed, maintained or used to transport timber on crown land must be tenured.

A person who has the right to harvest timber under the *Forest Act*, such as a forest licensee, is issued a road tenure by the Province. Road tenures, such as a Road Permit, carry with them an ongoing obligation for road maintenance to a safe standard while in use, and a requirement to deactivate so the tenure can be terminated.

The *Forest Planning and Practices Regulation* requires a person who deactivates a road to do the following:

- barricade the road surface width in a clearly visible manner to prevent access by motor vehicles, other than all-terrain vehicles;
- remove bridge and log culvert superstructures and stream pipe culverts;
- remove bridge and log culvert substructures, if the failure of these substructures would have a material adverse effect on downstream property, improvements or forest resources;
- stabilize the road prism or the clearing width of the road if the stabilization is necessary to reduce the likelihood of a material adverse effect on another resource.

The District encourages industry to notify other road users of deactivation plans, however there is no legal requirement to do that.

## Why Are Forest Roads Deactivated?

Deactivation is generally done to relieve the permit or tenure holder of their ongoing obligation to maintain roads and associated structures. This means that a road is no longer required for operational reasons, and the licensee or the Province do not have the financial means to hold the liability and incur costs associated with maintenance.

Protecting public safety, the environment, financial investment in roads, and meeting higher level plan objectives are also reasons why roads are deactivated.

Road deactivation activities are increasing throughout the District for the reasons stated above.

## Who is Deactivating Forest Roads?

In general, forest roads are deactivated by forest licensees or tenure holders and the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development (FLNRORD), including BC Timber Sales.

Deactivation projects are also being completed by local First Nations, in collaboration with forest licensees and FLNRORD. Projects of note include the *North Thompson Caribou Recovery Access Management Project* being done by the Simpcw First Nation, and the *Bonaparte Plateau Access Management Strategy (Moose and Watershed Stewardship Pilot)* being done by Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc.

## How are Forest Roads Deactivated?

Road deactivation requires significant planning as well as appropriate site supervision and inspections. It may be part of a larger access management plan or watershed plan for a specific area. Deactivation prescriptions are prepared by qualified professionals and include the objectives and the deactivation works to be performed.

Deactivation techniques are typically completed with the use of heavy machinery such as an excavator. Machine operators may: remove bridges & stream culverts; install water bars and cross-ditches to control erosion; implement vehicle access-control measures; maintain or re-establish natural hill slope drainage patterns; construct or alter slope angles to be stable; and rehabilitate the road surface through decompaction and site preparation for planting.

## What are the Benefits of Road Deactivation?

There are many significant benefits, such as: minimizing the risks to environmental, social & economic resources within and adjacent to roads from hazards such as landslides, soil erosion and sediment transport; improving fish & wildlife habitat, in addition to supporting the recovery of endangered wildlife species such as the woodland caribou; and an improved timber supply and opportunity to sequester carbon through the rehabilitation of roads followed by tree planting.

It is recognized that deactivation can directly affect access that has historically been available to other users. Deactivation could potentially be avoided if a road is tenured to a different user. An example of this would be another road user assuming responsibility for the road under a *Licence of Occupation*.

Please contact the Thompson Rivers Forest District with any questions or comments.