

January 2004

Ministry of Forests

FOREST STEWARDSHIP PLANS PRODUCE ENFORCEABLE RESULTS

Under the Forest and Range Practices Act and its regulations, all major tenure holders – companies, groups or individuals with logging rights on Crown land – must prepare a forest stewardship plan. Government must approve this plan before a single tree is felled.

The forest stewardship plan is the cornerstone of the results-based approach governing forest practices under the Act. In their plans, tenure holders must state explicitly how they will address government objectives for key forest values, such as soils and wildlife. These proposals are the “results” of the results-based framework.

The results-based regime provides both government and tenure holders a more streamlined and efficient planning process. For example, the forest stewardship plan replaces the three operational plans formerly required under the Forest Practices Code. The comprehensive stewardship plan may be in place for up to five years, while its counterpart under the Code could be in place for only up to two years. The new plans will encourage longer-term planning, contribute to sound forest management, reduce paperwork and encourage innovation.

Preparing a forest stewardship plan

A forest tenure holder must meet all the requirements of forestry legislation and regulations, mainly, the Forest and Range Practices Act and the Forest Planning and Practices Regulation, which set out all the requirements for preparing a forest stewardship plan.

A forest stewardship plan must address objectives set by government to preserve the integrity of the environment and to enable sustainable commercial forest and rangeland practices. Tenure holders address these objectives by crafting results or strategies, which are required to be measurable and enforceable, contributing to effective compliance and enforcement by government.

The Forest Planning and Practices Regulation sets out the objectives for the following values: soils, timber, water, fish, wildlife, biodiversity and cultural heritage resources.

Some values are managed through practice requirements under the regulation, which serve as standards for on-the-ground practices, for example to prevent landslides. If a plan area includes a stream, the results or strategies for riparian areas must be consistent with government’s overall objective to conserve water quality, fish and wildlife habitats and biodiversity. The plan must meet requirements to protect fish and fish habitat by maintaining fish passage and stream channel integrity, and ensuring activities are timed to minimize risk to fish and fish habitat.

The Act requires a forest stewardship plan to include a map that indicates the boundaries within which proposed activities will occur. The map must also indicate where commercial activities are restricted, such as reserves and parks, and areas with previously approved activities.

The forest stewardship plan is the first step in the planning process. The licensee must also prepare specific site plans, and apply for and be granted cutting and road construction permits before work begins.

Balancing social, economic and environmental interests

Timber is included among the government objectives. The timber objective clarifies that an economically valuable supply of commercial timber is important and that government will encourage a vigorous, efficient and world competitive industry. This objective reflects the contribution of commercial forestry to the quality of life of every British Columbian by the provision of revenues for vital public services like health care and education.

All the objectives contained in the planning and practices regulations, excluding that for cultural heritage resources, include the phrase “without unduly reducing the supply of timber from British Columbia’s forests.” This inclusion reflects the balance of social, economic and environmental interests; and sustainability of the province’s timber supply.

Public and First Nations involvement

The forest stewardship plan is very much a public document. Tenure holders must provide the public and First Nations adequate opportunities for review and comment on the plan. Licensees must then indicate how they have incorporated those views before submitting the plan to government.

Specific cut block or road locations are not contained within the forest stewardship plan, but in a subsequent site plan. The site plan must show the approximate location of harvest areas and roads, and must indicate how the results and strategies set out in the forest stewardship plan will apply on the site. The site plan is not approved by government but must be available to the public and First Nations, on request.

Contact: Don McDonald
Communications Director
250 387-8486