

Working Roundtable on Forestry A Submission by the ABCFP

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Introduction

The Association of BC Forest Professionals (ABCFP) is pleased to make this submission to the Working Roundtable on Forestry.

While there is much good work being done in the forests by industry and government, the ABCFP, as protectors of the public's interest, has selected five focus areas where changes and improvements will have the most positive impact on the economic, environmental and cultural values of the forests.

We address each of the five focus areas in this submission. Briefly, the ABCFP sees the **Planning Gap** as a structural problem in determining land use with multiple users. Tenure is currently the primary vehicle for commercial access to forest values and therefore, **Tenure Reform** is an opportunity for aligning tenures with social goals. **Diversification** is an essential change in focus to encourage the promotion of non-timber commodities, investments and culture in the forest sector. **Community Foundation** describes the multi-dimensional application that is required for a sustainable community and forest. **Expertise Succession** is the need to intensify our efforts to bring new people and ideas to the management of the forests.

Within these five areas are the building blocks of sustainable development. Stewardship of forest resources by professionals for the long term will strengthen our cultures and provide collective opportunities for the generations that follow.

1.0 Recognize the Planning Gap and Implement Land-Based Management

For the past two years, the Association of BC Forest Professionals (ABC FP) has been studying the planning framework in BC with an eye toward improving it for the future. During our study, it became obvious that many problems originate from gaps in information and a coordination gap within the current planning framework. While there has been much good work done to establish higher level plans, we have examples of various business interests, ministries or other jurisdictions operating on the same land base creating cumulative impacts with little or no coordination.

As we studied the planning framework in BC, it became evident that landscape and resource planning is often driven by the specific management goals of separate organizations with limited or no coordination with other organizations. In other words, planning work is occurring in silos. In forestry terms, this behaviour can negatively impact future harvest opportunities, discourages investment in the next rotation, and increases the risk of poor stewardship of BC's forests and lands (for example, forestry companies, oil and gas organizations and independent power producers are working at odds with each other). The ABCFP is concerned that there is no one agency responsible for coordinating or monitoring cumulative impacts of various resource uses.

Others have made a similar observation regarding the planning gap. For example, a recent FRPA Bulletin, *Application of FRPA to other Occupiers of the Land*, provides a guidance to work around the predicament.

The absence of a single tactical platform to set and implement objectives has led to planning or actions that exclude other resources and values. The situation has resulted in fractured management of the land base, operational inefficiencies and financial waste.

We recommend that the province pursue a strategy of land-based management: a clear understanding of the objectives that will achieve a vision for Crown land. In order for the vision to be delivered and carried out, these objectives must be in place and unilaterally activated across the province. Land-based management is a philosophical shift that is intended to change the way agencies that address land values and stakeholder relationships achieve their mandates. More details on land-based management are provided in the attached Land-Based Management Statement (see Appendix 1) prepared by the ABCFP's stewardship advisory committee and will be released in the very near future.

Embracing land-based management will address and resolve many outstanding issues that have come about through the current circumstances of multiple jurisdictions, agencies, tenures, resource users and influences such as climate change.

It also has the capacity to link planning processes back to general stewardship objectives and create efficiencies for all parties currently struggling to work on the landscape.

2.0 Tenure Reform

The vast majority of the forests in BC remain in public ownership and this fact has long been the effective bond between the forest resource and the standard of living enjoyed by British Columbians. Emerging changes in technology, climate change and human perceptions require that we respond with different mechanisms that can continue to supply the changing benefits and values of the forests.

The tenure system has been the primary method of accessing the economic benefits of the forest and for initiating development of provincial infrastructure such as roads, bridges, ports, mills, communication towers and communities. The tenure system is a complicated web of features including a long, reliable history, business investment in infrastructure and government commitments (e.g. tenure holders). Larger tensions such as a rising Canadian dollar, failed economics in poorer stands, larger volumes of available mountain pine beetle-killed wood, and the southern markets in recession have served to expose the vulnerability of the system and our vulnerability to risks inherent in global trends.

The tenure arrangement has many positive benefits, such as the past investment of corporate partners. There are other attributes that can point to a direction for change in the tenure system. We recommend the following ideas as a springboard to greater deliberation:

1. Sales of forest yield community revenue: Communities need to be connected to the financial benefits of the resource in ways that are visible. For example, a timber sale is recognized by the community as providing the revenue that paid for a new fire truck. Without concrete examples, the financial benefits received by a community like Vancouver are invisible. Unclear allocation of revenue creates the perception that the community can do without the resource.
2. Diversify the tenure system: As forest professionals, we can recognize that when ecological diversity is reduced, the ecosystem is at greater risk. Economic diversity can be thought of in the same general context and the consolidation of tenures is an increased risk. Consider broadening the tenure diversity to derive different government revenue streams such as:
 - a) Utilizing a form of tenure that generates a greater certainty for licensees of balancing long term costs and benefits.
 - b) Significantly increasing the number of small area based forest tenures located

close to rural and urban settings, such as community forests and woodlot licences.

c) Exclusive use of pristine recreation at the exclusion of other uses, for example, distributing a tenure to a recreation company for exclusive recreation use in exchange for a stumpage-like revenue.

d) Biofuel tenures that are managed to produce the highest amount of woody biomass in the shortest period of time, such as planting 4,000 stems per hectare that are harvested after 15 years of growth.

3. Stumpage Infatuation: While it is but one of the costs of doing business, the stumpage system receives an inordinate amount of attention in the delivery of services. The negotiation and estimate based methodology leads to undesirable outcomes. For example, if stumpage is of high enough cost to cause a forest company to close and lay off 100 workers, then the economic and social impact to all is a far greater loss than what the stumpage revenue would have been. Of greater concern are examples where stumpage is a barrier to good forest management (e.g. limitations imposed through the stumpage system reduces the operable forest land base by forcing harvesters to focus on areas where profit surplus can be generated; or road infrastructure is not built, roads not maintained and not treated as valued assets). The stumpage system occupies significant resources and needs to be changed. Therefore, consider redefining the method of payment for crown timber and the method of payment for crown assets such as roads and bridges described above.

4. User Pay Strategy to Forest Use: The public have always taken for granted the values from the forest as it relates to natural benefits. The belief that forest use is free is a myth that must be dispelled. For example, the timber extraction value has paid for the cost of access for all users (recreationalists, mining, etc) for many years. The time has come to establish an explicit connection between cost and value. For example, the dollar value of driving the road for 50 km to reach the camping location should be paid by the individual or by government. The user pay privilege can also improve the perceptive value of the forest with the public.

5. Ecosystem Levy: A form of public taxation is sometimes the most efficient means of protecting common property such as the public forests. Costs are currently attached to tenure, but clearly, a longer social benefit can be paid for by the tax.

The ABCFP, at the request of member resolution and council, has established a task force to inform the debate on tenure reform.

We must remain dedicated to the conservation of the forests. Not at the expense of business opportunity, but as the way of preserving the forest business foundation.

3.0 Diversification

The economic cycle of the primary forest use, timber, has tended to move with commodity markets. Similarly, the resilience of the forest ecosystem is in part dependent on the diversity within that ecosystem. So diversification, whether in nature or business, is often a reasonable method for reducing risk and changing the economic cycle. In order to diversify properly, it is necessary to have some vision of what the future forest and its uses look like. The ABCFP asks you to consider the following examples of the kinds of ways that diversification can be used to generate forest benefits and reduce risk for the landowners.

3.1 Products

The commodity based lumber and chips market has been a very strong product and is expected to continue being an important forest value. Also, a value-added focus in the past produced some niche markets that are valuable and enduring but cannot be produced en masse. The next stage of product diversification is in the commodity markets. Tax benefits and incentives can be used to operate or develop forests for use in larger scale ventures such as co-gen plants, biofuel initiatives, non-traditional forest products and engineered wood products. Consider encouraging a suite of opportunities and commercial ventures in other products, methodologies and utilization.

3.2 Investments

The BC forest is an asset requiring protection, maintenance and investment to continue to yield the benefits of the past. It is argued that our forests are still considered as a revenue generator rather than a living biological legacy (e.g. focus on free growing vs. crop planning; silviculture investment as a cost to harvesting; no value on biological benefits). Consider the following as the kinds of investments that bring us back to the long-term view:

- a) Manage and invest in forest stands after free growing and for the entire crop planning period.
- b) Invest in road development throughout the province and for a variety of purposes.
- c) Develop research in forests and forest uses that have long term applications.

3.3 Culture

The human perspective of forests has evolved significantly in the last 30 years since the previous Royal Commission of enquiry. Cultural drivers shaping our relationship with forests have included such realities as economic dependence, global perceptions of BC forest harvesting, dwindling economic margins, the human demographics of a large portion of the population base in a mega city environment. The BC resource culture was largely built on the team approach rather than the every person for him/herself. Consider the following as ideas for diversifying the perception of forests as part of the BC culture:

- a) Establish urban forests such as Stanley Park and Mundy Park for every municipality in BC for the purpose of sustainable forest values.
- b) In order to encourage the biofuel industry in BC, limit vehicle use in Vancouver to biofuels.
- c) Develop a public education strategy that highlights the forest and encourages the public to think of their community and their city as existing within, and dependent on, the forest for a multiple of values such as air, carbon sequestration and slope stability.

4.0 Community Foundation

The Canadian Policy Research Network in Ottawa describes the existing human demographic in Canada.

“Today more than 80 percent of Canadians live in urban areas, making Canada the second most urbanized nation in the world. Globally, cities have become major drivers of economic activity. A nation’s competitive advantage is directly related to the performance of its cities, not just economically, but socially and culturally as well.”

This is an interesting statistic in a country and a province known for its forests. A challenge facing the forests and forest sector in BC is the rapid de-population of rural communities and regions. Regional development is recognized as an essential precursor to economic development and prosperity. The rural/urban relationship is an interdependent one that is reliant upon natural resources. When the main industries decline and populations leave, many types of services are also reduced, centralized and moved elsewhere. This, in turn, causes more people to leave the community. Overall there is a decline in provincial growth and in support for the urban centres.

In looking for opportunities for the forests of BC, it is evident that the strength of rural communities will be required to capture the social benefits of the resource in the future. Focus on using the human and social capital in rural areas is one way to

strengthen the people, community and forest connection.

Consider the following strategies as indicators of the kinds of actions that provide resilience to communities and re-establish the long-term contribution of BC forests for multiple of values.

1. Decentralize the forest ministry to the land and regions in a way that gives autonomy back to the regional framework. The net result will be to strengthen the social and intellectual capital within the rural communities.
2. Continue to increase the relevance of First Nations communities to broader BC progress.
3. Focus on the community and the forest instead of the sector. Allow communities to make decisions and apply their strengths over their immediate resources. The ability to set goals, implement business strategies and solve problems in order to take charge of their future will ultimately rebuild the forest sector in that place.
4. Develop partnerships that build on forest assets and use a community's strengths as the basis for strategic government investments.

The strength of the community is adaptability and a team approach to solutions. Rural communities need to be able to come together to apply their strengths on the forest land and for the required stewardship of the land.

5.0 Expertise Succession

The last several years of economic slow down in the forest sector and other problems have led to a decline of the forest sector work force and the necessary educational products that support the expertise. Also, we have seen more and more forest professionals' skills utilized in non-traditional roles (such as BC utilities, independent power producer projects, Tourism BC, etc.).

All partners in the management of BC forests need to intensify our efforts to create an acceptance that the long-term outlook for the forest and its values is very good. More practitioners with different and varied skills will be required than in the past.

For the past several years, the ABCFP has driven the Inclusivity Project in the certification of forest professionals in Canada. The standards have just been completed and will allow for more inclusive entrance standards that enable recognition of a broader range of professional forestry practitioners and will facilitate innovation in the education of forestry professionals as well as in the practice of professional forestry itself. The standards will maintain the strength and rigor of

admittance to the profession but will be flexible enough to allow for broadened university education base. The future forest professional will have a forest education coupled with experience that is needed to keep pace with changes in practice and society's expectations from the forest.

Education is important because it advances the practice of forestry in BC's forests. It is essential for the emerging practitioner in college or university, as a life-long learning commitment for the practitioner and finally, for the transfer of technology and research to the practising professional. The government representing the people of BC are the owners and beneficiaries of a very large forest. The owners need to invest in the components that are necessary if the forest is to continue to generate those benefits. The ABCFP recommends that the following three steps are needed to provide the necessary workforce in the future forests of BC.

1. Re-establish strong support of forest resource education programs in the colleges and universities of BC.
2. Establish an institutional framework for advanced forest education and continuing education of forest professionals.
3. Increase research in the forest asset and provide sufficient extension services to ensure that the research and technology is transferred to the practitioner.

While not meant to be complete, the three-step strategy points the way to a strengthened practitioner who is able to meet the emerging economic, social and environmental demands placed on the forest resource.

Appendix 1 : Land-Based Management Statement

Land-Based Management Concept

The Association of BC Forest Professionals (ABCFFP) recommends that a land-based management philosophy be adopted in British Columbia.

Land-based management means that management of forested and non-forested land in BC will be applied in a consistent, comprehensive and cohesive manner, integrating all sectors, for all interests that respect the characteristics and potential of the land.

Background

Over the past several years, the ABCFFP has prepared or received reports on fire, oil and gas, inventories, stocking standards and most recently, a utopian view of planning processes in BC. Through these papers, an underlying theme is apparent: land management in BC consists of separate sectors, agencies and interests, all attempting to influence what occurs on the same land base and often for reasons that are in conflict with each other. In recent years it has become evident that landscape and resource planning occurs by separate organizations driven by specific management goals with limited or no coordination of objectives or outcomes. In other words, this work is occurring in silos. In forestry terms, this behaviour doesn't encourage investment in the next rotation and increases the risk for poor stewardship of BC's forests and lands

There is potential for common ground. What is needed is a clear understanding of the objectives that will achieve a vision for Crown land that provides for future generations of British Columbians and for all management to be consistent with those objectives. In order for the vision to be delivered and carried out, these objectives must be in place and unilaterally activated across the province. The current absence of such a platform of objectives has led to the nature of silo-type planning and has resulted in fractured management of the land base and operational inefficiencies.

Components

Land-based management will be achieved when:

1. Land objectives are set that apply to all of the Crown land in the province, for all critical factors identified as requiring management for any sector, or for any purpose.
 - These can be set and applied at any appropriate scale, from provincially to locally and can build on work already in place, like the Land and Resource Management Plans done in the past.

2. The land objectives in place clearly indicate what is desired from the land, including objectives that describe:
 - the benefits to be derived from the land;
 - the desired current and future state for the varied physical attributes of the land;
 - which aspects of the land are to be actively managed; and
 - where and at what scale the objectives apply.
3. All land objectives are applicable to all sectors for all purposes.
 - All and any activities on the land need to be consistent with not only the objectives identified for the sector in which that activity falls, but with all objectives, regardless of the sector for which the objective was originally prepared.
4. All sectors and interests that are active on or make use of the land and its resources are demonstrably consistent with the land objectives.
 - “Demonstrably” means that any sector can show how it has made the link between its on-the-ground activities and the land objectives.
5. The land objectives and the demonstration of consistency are reviewed and updated through periodic and regular monitoring and feedback.

Recommendation

The association believes that land-based management is a critical change in philosophy that must be embraced. However, this does not necessarily require a wholesale change in legislation or government structures. We recognize that there is no desire for additional layers of planning; therefore this initiative needs to improve and extend the current agency and stakeholder relationships that exist on the land base. The Association of BC Forest Professionals recommends that the following steps be taken:

1. The Province of BC describes and collates all existing land objectives.
2. Provincial agencies, regulated stakeholders and First Nations agree to extend the application of all land objectives across all resource sectors.
 - This will require evaluating and addressing any overlapping constraints.

3. The Province of BC (or other assigned organization), through an inclusive process, identifies where land objectives are missing and at what scale they should be applied.
4. The Province of BC describes and applies new land objectives as necessary, across all sectors and to all regulated stakeholders.
5. Provincial agencies, regulated stakeholders and First Nations agree to implement policies that enable and encourage all users or beneficiaries of the land to coordinate planning at the appropriate level within their respective organizations.
6. Provincial agencies and regulated stakeholders coordinate, collate, adjust and revise current land-based monitoring structures to be consistent with this land-based management philosophy.

Embracing land-based management will address and resolve many outstanding issues that have come about through the current circumstances of multiple jurisdictions, agencies, tenures, resource users, and influences such as climate change. It also has the capacity to link planning processes back to general stewardship objectives and create efficiencies that all parties currently struggle to obtain.

This simple change to a philosophy of land-based management in BC – moving towards a common ground – may be the most important land management decision made in BC in this century.



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Ensuring BC's Forests Are In Good Hands.