

Appraisal Practice Issue #3: Moving a Wildlife Tree Patch (WTP) After the Original Cruise Plan Is Submitted (August 2008)

A cruise plan is submitted and subsequently the cruisers begin sampling. While in the field, the cruiser decides to make changes to the location of the original 'in-block' WTP. Upon final CP submission, the licensee provides a rationale with valid forest management reasons to support the change to the original cruise plan and submits this rationale within a signed letter to the MFR. The reviewing district forest professional accepts the submitted rationale. The reviewing forest professional is aware of the submitting forest professionals due diligence protocols in cutting permit applications.

Example

Forest professional A submits a cruise plan and letter to a district office following the provincial standard identified in the Cruise Manual. During the field work a previously undiscovered nest is found to contain birds identified as a species at risk. The cruisers identify this area for a new wildlife tree patch. Forest Professional A then submits a rationale with the forest management reason for the amendment to the cruise plan and proceeds with CP application. Should the reviewing forest professional accept the cruise plan amendment when it is clear that bias is now introduced to the cruise?

Conclusion: For this specific cruise plan change

Forest professionals, whose role it is to submit or review cruise plans, understand the principles of sampling and apply these principles consistent with the intent of the cruise sampling standards. He or she is to provide a rationale (i.e. a record of all relevant information that was used to develop the change to the plan) that outlines the reasons for moving the WTP. The forest professional recognizes that bias in a cruise does not meet the cruise standards and will affect the integrity of the sample statistics. However, for valid forest management reasons this cruise is acceptable to be used for the appraisal because the change is 'rare and minor' in nature. (Major changes require a new cruise to be submitted). In this example, the new WTP location was rooted in good forest stewardship and not based on any intention to bias the cruise. The introduction of bias affects the integrity of the sample statistics; therefore, it is incumbent upon the submitting professional to provide a professional rationale that demonstrates the operational and site factors related to changes (area or plot movement) from the original plan and for the reviewing forest professional to consider these factors.

A few valuable technical questions the submitting forest professional may ask her or himself while contemplating the professional rationale include:

- Is the change made for good forest management reasons?
- Is the change rare and minor in nature?
- Does the remaining cruise data accurately represent the new population?

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If there is a disagreement or question over the rationale, then a site visit might be required to improve discussion on the issue. Additionally, a one-on-one discussion between the forest professionals regarding each others' due diligence would be a benefit to arriving at a solution.

In this case, once the written rationale is provided by the submitting forest professional, then the reviewing forest professional provides deference, using a test of reasonableness and accepts the change to the plan.