



Are You Side-Stepping Professional Reliance?

Photo: Brenda Martin

PROFESSIONAL RELIANCE IS “THE PRACTICE of accepting and relying upon the decisions and advice of professionals who accept responsibility and can be held accountable for the decisions they make and the advice they give.” (Guideline: Definition of Professional Reliance, September 2004)

Forest professionals ensure that professional reliance works when they competently carry out professional work consistent with ABCFP Standards of Practice and the Code of Ethics. Professional reliance includes the expectation that forest professionals will take into account the wide range of circumstances and interests and will balance them within the laws that govern the management of forests, forest land, forest resources and forest ecosystems.

Where is Professional Reliance Working?

Ecosystem Based Management: Forest professionals, practising on the Central Coast, are expected to use ecosystem-based management (EBM) objectives in a higher level plan established via Order in Council. The routine of the forest professional in this case includes the regular duties of forest management, plus additional consultation with local publics, refinement and understanding of resource science data, extensive geographic mapping of specific watersheds, specific values, inventories and activities, all the while interpreting the economic conditions in the area. Forest professionals conduct their practices with thoroughness

and diligence. They are also advocating with agencies where the higher level plan objectives require refinement and specificity to be more effective. The forest professionals accomplish these complex tasks because they adhere to our standards of professional practice and Code of Ethics. Professional reliance works here because the forest professionals are trusted and reliable sources of options for their employers and the public while transacting the contractual and legal obligations in a sensitive ecosystem area.

Where Does Professional Reliance Need Help?

Reliance on Non-Professionals: Employers and government officials are active partners and affect the success of professional reliance. Several examples have come to the ABCFP in recent months where the employer and government agency have unknowingly relied on professional forestry advice from non-professionals and questionable sources. The outcome is that this advice has been used to guide forest management in the area. The ABCFP takes measures to enforce the *Foresters Act* and contacts employers to ensure they meet the requirements in law. Employers need to ensure that those engaged in the practice of professional forestry for forest/resource management, are resource professionals, registered and in good standing with a resource profession in BC.

In the management of forests, forest resources and ecosystems, risks to public

interest are reduced by engaging the services of resource professionals. Because the forest management time frame occurs over many years, over a dozen resource professionals may be relied upon to competently conduct their professional practices within the life of a forest. The resource professional needs the employers and government to ensure an intact management connection is maintained between resource professionals and the planning and activities on BC forest resources and forest lands.

Many documents on the ABCFP website provide direction that will help ensure your practice is consistent with the expectations for professional reliance. Check out these publications:

- Guidance for Professional Quality Rationales and Commitments, September 2008
- Developing Professional Advice, July 2008
- Applying Professional Reliance under FRPA, May 2008
- Professional Reliance: From Concept to Practice, July 2006

If you have questions about professional reliance in your area, send them to the Practice Advisory Service via Mike Larock, RPF, director of professional practice and forest stewardship (mlarock@abcfp.ca). The Practice Advisory Service provides confidential advice to members on matters of professional opinion, ethical conduct and professional principles. 🌿

Michael Larock, RPF, is director of professional practice and forest stewardship at the ABCFP.