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April 26, 2007

Dwight Yochim, RPF
Director of Professional Practice and Forest Stewardship
Association of BC Forest Professionals
1030 - 1188 West Georgia Street
Vancouver, British Columbia
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Dear Dwight:

Re: **Assessment of the Status of Forest Inventories in British Columbia (November 2006)**

I would like to express my appreciation for the work the association undertook in completing their inventory review *Assessment of the Status of Forest Inventories in BC*.

At the time the inventory program was returned to the BC Forest Service (BCFS) in 2005, I started to ask similar questions about the program and therefore we undertook a thorough review as well.

The Association of BC Forest Professionals' (ABC FP) assessment mirrors many of the issues raised in our internal BCFS Inventory Program Review, which started in October 2005 and was completed in October 2006.

The positive news is we are already making significant progress in a number of areas. In the following sections I will cover our areas of progress in the order they were presented in the recommendations section of the Association's Report.

1. Stable Funding: The Forest Investment Council has recently agreed to focus \$8 million annually for the forest inventory program. The program is further supported by substantial provincial and federal funding for MPB-related inventories.

2. Clear Responsibility: The forest inventory program has been returned to the Ministry of Forests and Range and as the chief forester it is now my responsibility to ensure the forest inventory meets our business needs. While there is no new legislation to mandate this responsibility, in the past having legislation did not necessarily afford complete stability to the program. Therefore at this time, I am satisfied legislation is not required.



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Ministry of Forests
and Range

Chief Forester's Office

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3. Completing Provincial Coverage: During fiscal 2007/08, a program plan will be developed that outlines a schedule to complete the provincial inventories to the VRI standards with a target date of 2015.

4, 5 and 14. Attribution and Resolution: I recognize the desirability of improved accuracy and attribution. Over the next few years, we will be examining opportunities to support inventories that provide improved attribution and increased spatial accuracy.

6. The Council: We formed the new Vegetation Inventory Advisory Council last fall, which is comprised of agency and industry members. The council's role is to provide strategic guidance and oversight of the forest inventory program that in turn will facilitate the on-going support from the Forest Investment Council.

7. Forecasting Future Outcomes: Since 2005, the Future Forests Ecosystem Initiative has been underway and over the next several years will include a number of new projects and activities aimed at examining potential impacts from climate change. Where appropriate, the inventory program will seek opportunities to support this initiative.

8. Growth and Yield: The growth and yield component of the inventory program has recently received stable annual funding of about \$500,000. We are developing a new **provincial growth and yield strategy** that will be driving investments starting this year. On another related topic, I am pleased to announce the recent release of a new version of our Variable Density Yield Projection model (VDYP – version 7).

9. Public Access to Information: The ability to have access to our forest inventory maps and associated data is fundamental to the program. Map and data products are available to the public via the online mapping and data distribution service of the provincial Land and Resource Data Warehouse (LRDW), much of it at no charge. As well, access to cartographic products is provided for a fee by Clover Point Cartographics.

10. Archiving Inventory Data: The historic variations in funding have required that some aspects of the inventory program, such as archiving, have been deferred to protect core program deliverables. However, I anticipate with a more stable and robust program that key elements such as improved storage and archiving of data will emerge.

11. New Technologies: Over this coming year, in partnership with other agencies, MoFR staff will be reviewing the latest research and technologies that might be of value to support business needs and budget constraints in the future. We have established a remote sensing team in the Forest Analysis and Inventory Branch that is focused on increased use of remote sensing tools to track changes to the forest landscapes. In addition, there may be alternative sources of data that we will need leverage as inputs to the inventory.

12. Internal Capacity: With increased funding and associated inventory activities there is a need to have more qualified staff and contractors. Due to some recent retirements we have hired five new inventory staff and plan for several more in the coming year. We are establishing a training program for inventory and analysis-related activities. Its first priorities will be the training needs of our staff and the determination of how best to support the training needs of non-agency individuals.

13 and 15. Inventory Update and Replacement: An exciting new software tool – Vegetation Resource Information Management System (VRIMS) is now undergoing final testing and will be operational this year. It will incorporate depletion data provided by licensees to update the inventory on an annual basis. The currency and quality of the updates will be dependent upon data submissions into “RESULTS”, new Landsat imagery and all other available sources. Quality assurance mechanisms are in place to maintain data integrity. Over the coming year, we will be developing criteria for investments in inventory replacement or enhancement.

16. Linkage to related data: Ideally, all forest data should be integratable, both spatially and for attribution. Opportunities to leverage alternative data sources will be the short-term focus of the program. In the mid to longer term, more comprehensive integration opportunities will be explored where a strong business case can be made.

17. Periodic Program Reviews: The Vegetation Inventory Advisory Council’s mandate includes monitoring and reporting the status (progress and opportunities) on an annual basis to the chief forester.

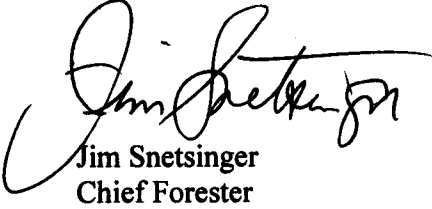
18. Periodic Inventory Reports: While our inventory program regularly contributes data and information to a number of publications and initiatives which inform the public about the state of British Columbia’s forests (e.g., B.C. State of the Forest Report, Canadian Criteria and Indicators Framework, National Forestry Database Program Compendium of Forest Statistics, Canadian Report on Wood Supply, etc.), I agree that a regular set of reports should be pursued and I will ask staff to examine the opportunities for periodic, regionalized reporting of inventory statistics for the province.

19. Quality Assurance: A review of the current quality assurance system is now underway and I anticipate recommendations later this year on how to implement an effective system.

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Association of BC Forest Professionals

In closing, I am very excited about the new direction and our plans for improving the inventory program in the coming months and years. For more information about the program, its new direction and activities, I invite you to visit the Forest Analysis and Inventory Branch website at www.for.gov.bc.ca/hts/.

Sincerely,



Jim Snetsinger
Chief Forester

cc: Doug Konkin, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Forests and Range
Henry Benskin, Deputy Chief Forester, Ministry of Forests and Range
Tim Sheldon, ADM-Operations Division
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