

**Determination Rationale for the
Order to Identify Karst Resource Features in the Chilliwack Forest District.**

Authority:

Authority has been delegated from the Minister of Forests and Range (MFR) to the applicable District Manager of MFR to identify resource features under the *Forest and Range Practices Act* (FRPA) and section 5 (1) of the *Government Actions Regulation* (GAR).

Planning Context:

Karst resource features are identified as a value to be managed in the *Government Actions Regulation* (GAR section 5(1)(a) Resource features) and currently do not have protection under FRPA. The purpose of this Order is to achieve a reasonable level of management that will protect and conserve the resource. Previous karst management consisted of knowledge and awareness through publications, policy and education from 1994 onward and operationally resulted in special management plans being implemented for block and road development. There are a number of unique values found in karst landscape features. Currently, Karst GAR Orders have been established in four Coast Region districts which have karst features within the districts.

GAR Legislative Tests:

GAR section 2 (1) (a): the order is consistent with established objectives

A Landscape Unit plan has been established for the Chilliwack and Silverhope Landscape Units. Some old growth management areas (OGMA) overlap known cave/karst locations. There are no known inconsistencies between this order and the established LU plans.

A Landscape Unit plan for old growth has not been established for the Fraser Valley South Landscape Unit but there are proposed OGMAs for the landscape unit. I am not aware of any inconsistencies between the draft Landscape Unit order and this order.

GAR section 2(1) (b): the order would not unduly reduce the supply of timber from British Columbia's forests

The overlap of karst potential area with the Fraser TSA timber harvesting land base (THLB) is less than 5% and in that area the potential of finding karst features ranges from moderate to high. Only a small subset of this area is expected to meet the criteria for management under the Karst GAR Order (karst caves, very high or high vulnerability karst terrain and significant surface karst features).

In the current timber supply review, recreation value net downs overlap with some of the known karst resource features (usually caves). A total 39 ha of forest have been removed for recreation net downs. A number of karst resource features are also located outside the THLB. These will not impact the Fraser TSA's allowable annual cut.

It is expected some karst resource features within the THLB will be managed in part through other existing constraints, e.g. draft OGMAs in Fraser Valley South Landscape Unit, spotted owl management areas and visual constraints. Agreement holders may also have the opportunity to

lessen the potential impact through the placement of wildlife tree patches during operational planning.

- GAR section 2 (1) (c): the benefits to the public derived from the order would outweigh any**
- (i) material adverse impact of the order on delivered wood costs of a holder of an agreement under the *Forest Act* that would be affected by the order, and**
 - (ii) undue constraint on the ability of a holder of an agreement under the *Forest Act* or the *Range Act* that would be affected by the order to exercise the holder's rights under the agreement**

Operational experience has shown there would likely be an insignificant impact to the THLB under this order. It is expected that the small percentage of karst resource features within the Fraser Timber Supply Area would be managed using conventional practices and overlapping constraints. The intent is to minimize access restrictions to the highly productive timber growing sites.

Public values and benefits include potential cultural values in or around caves, karst springs or other karst resource features. Food, medicine or large trees for First Nations cultural uses may also exist in the highly productive sites in which karst resource features occur. Other values include mineral values, scientific & educational opportunities, and recreational uses.

No specific concerns over delivered wood costs have been brought forward by affected agreement holders under the *Forest Act* during the review and consultation period. One agreement holder stated a concern over the lack of specific information regarding the location of karst resource features affected by this order and the challenge of working with aspatial orders. Information on the general location of some karst cave features is available through the Geographic Warehouse (formerly known as Land Resource Data Warehouse). Additional specific information is not currently available.

GAR section 3: Consultation and review

Agreement holders under the *Forest Act*:

This order covers a portion of the Chilliwack Forest District, therefore communication efforts were directed to four agreement holders (licensees and BCTS) who have FSPs within the area covered by the order.

Prior to the review and consultation period, information was provided on the Karst GAR order and an opportunity was made available to discuss the development and implementation of the order. One agreement holder attended the meeting and stated a preference for training prior to the implementation of the order. Consistent with FRPA, there is an expectation that professionals will determine and undertake their own training necessary to implement orders.

A 60 day review and consultation period was initiated with affected agreement holders on October 15, 2008. Discussions were held with one agreement holder regarding exchange of spatial data. No other responses were received during the review and consultation period.

First Nations:

Prior to the consultation period, a meeting was held with two First Nations groups on June 19, 2008 to discuss the Karst GAR Order process, receive initial input and provide an early opportunity for First Nations involvement in the process. Concerns raised at the meeting and during follow-up communications included the spiritual and cultural values in caves, rock outcrops and potentially other karst resource features. The importance of communication and

adequate assessment procedures were stressed by MFR. The lack of specific information regarding karst resource features was also a concern. In response to the concerns raised, MFR DCK provided further information on karst resource features to the FN groups. By implementing this order, karst caves and other valued karst resource features will be afforded a higher level of protection.

Consultation letters were sent to all First Nations that hold asserted traditional territory within the area covered by this order on October 15, November 19, 2008 and January 29, 2009. Requests were made for identification of aboriginal interests that may be affected by the order and offers for meetings or further discussions were given. Discussions were held with one First Nations group regarding the exchange of spatial data. No other responses were received during the review and consultation period.

Caving community:

The community stakeholders most directly affected by this order are the speleological or caving groups which are active in the Chilliwack River Valley. MFR attended a meeting with the BC Speleological Federation on May 30 2008 and also received a letter from them dated December 12, 2008. The Federation endorsed the order. They also raised a number of concerns related to cave management that are outside the scope of this order or that relate to the implementation of the order.

GAR section 5 (2): Special management required

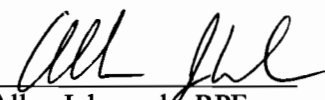
Karst resource features include unique biological, cultural, social and economic aspects. Protection of the features covered by this order is not provided under existing legislation and is limited to other values or constraints that may overlap some of the features. Since specific locations of karst resource features have not been spatially identified, management of karst values through other overlapping resource designations or approved plans may be a concern to the protection of these unique features.

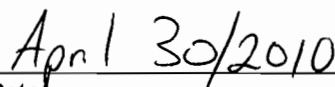
GAR Order Implementation / Interpretation:

Appropriate application of this order relies on the professional judgement of foresters and appropriate karst experts. Guidance is available through the Karst Management Handbook for BC (May, 2003) and the Karst Inventory Standards and Vulnerability Assessment Procedures (January, 2003).

Determination:

In consideration of the pertinent details related to this issue, and social and economic values applicable for this resource, I have concluded that karst resource features should be identified through a GAR Order. Accordingly, I have approved the '*Order to Identify Karst Resource Features in the Chilliwack Forest District*'.


Allan Johnsrude, RPF
District Manager
Chilliwack Forest District


Date