BRITISH COLUMBIA

File: 16240-02

July 28, 2005

To All Licensees

Dear Licensee:

Following the legal establishment of visual quality objectives (VQO) through Section 17 of the *Government Actions Regulation (GAR)* for scenic areas made known prior to October 24, 2002, many questions have been raised regarding the practicality of developing results or strategies to meet the established VQO in areas affected by the mountain pine beetle (MPB) outbreak. Questions have also been raised regarding the apparent inconsistency between the legally established VQO and the objectives modelled through the timber supply review (TSR) process in the Lakes timber supply area (TSA). The purpose of this letter is to state my expectations concerning the management of visual quality objectives in areas affected by the outbreak.

The quality of the visual landscape within the Morice and Lakes TSAs is important to local residents and visitors. Their expectations regarding the management of this value are expressed in approved and draft Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMP) and in existing visual landscape inventories (VLI). These expectations are reflected by the *Forest and Range Practices Act* (FRPA). The MPB outbreak in itself does not change the importance of the value to the public or expectations regarding resource management in scenic areas. Rather, the outbreak introduces an element of complexity where salvage operations overlap scenic areas. I would also like to point out that many scenic areas are located outside of salvage zones.

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On January 10, 2001, following the approval of the Lakes LRMP, a letter designating known LRMP information was sent. This information included the visual areas delineated in the LRMP and the recommended visual quality objectives as per existing visual landscape inventories. On October 30, 2001, and December 21, 2000, letters were sent to provide guidance and directions with regards to beetle management activities within known scenic areas. Although it was never specifically stated in writing, the guidelines outlined in these letters were modelled as a one class VQO relaxation in the most recent timber supply review for the Lakes TSA.

Ministry of
Forests and Range

Nadina Forest District

Location:
185 Yellowhead Hwy,
Burns Lake, BC

Mailing Address:
Box 3500
Burns Lake, BC V0J 1E0

Tel: (250) 692-2200
Fax: (250) 692-7461

Licensee

I will continue to review and approve Forest Development Plans (FDP) and FDP amendments submitted under the *Forest Practices Code of BC Act* based on the guidelines outlined in the letters mentioned above for the Lakes TSA. For the Morice TSA, FDP and FDP amendments review and approval will be based on the guidelines outlined in the December 3, 1998, *District Manager's Policy Regarding Visual Resource Management*.

With regard to Forest Stewardship Plan (FSP), I expect that results or strategies for scenic areas will address the objectives set by government for visual quality. This means that alterations within scenic areas are to be designed to meet the VQOs established through the GAR 17 process.

In areas of the Lakes TSA where salvage operations may compromise the established visual quality objectives, and when a variance is requested, I may use Section 17 of FRPA (Approval in Emergency Cases) to approve a FSP. In these cases, I expect the operations will be designed to mimic, both spatially and temporally, the patterns of natural disturbances that occur within the landscape. This is similar to the wildlife and biodiversity requirements stated in section 9 of the *Forest Planning and Practices Regulations* (FPPR). To determine results related to the amount of material that might mimic natural disturbance patterns, please be guided by a one-class VQO relaxation.

I trust this letter provides you with enough information regarding my expectations to continue the preparation of FDP, FSP, and amendments. Should you require additional information, please contact Gunter Hoehne, Stewardship Officer, at 250-692-2226.

Yours truly,

Sue McDiarmid

for Mark Vieweg
District Manager
Nadina Forest District