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November 9 1998

All Major Licensees and  
Small Business Forest Enterprise Program  
Lakes Forest District

Dear Sirs:

I would like to provide Licensees who operate in the Lakes Forest District with clarification on the issue of Scenic Area management.

The purpose of this letter is to clarify the following topics: establishment of Visual Quality Objectives (VQOs), introduction of recommended Visual Quality Classes (rVQC), changes to the % alteration ranges, Management of scenic areas ( Scenic and Visual Sensitive areas) and requirements of Visual Impact Assessments.

#### Visual Quality Objectives

A Visual Quality Objective is a resource management objective established by the District Manager or contained in higher level plan that reflects the desired level of visual quality based on the physical characteristics and social concerns for the area. The establishment of VQOs requires an analysis of the Visual Landscape Inventory (VLI), including examination of all strategic land use plans or higher level plans , review of social and economic objectives of the Crown, analysis of the potential impact of VQOs on timber supply, and consultation with all stakeholders. This process may coincide with the Districts Landscape Unit planning process. Presently in the Lakes, there are no known scenic areas with established VQOs.

#### Visual Quality Class

The previous Visual Landscape Inventory (VLI) maps show recommended visual quality objectives (rVQOs) as part of the polygon label on the VLI maps. To separate the inventory and analysis process, the rVQO will be removed from the VLI maps and will be replaced with recommended Visual Quality Classes (rVQC). Until analysis of the VLI is conducted in the Lakes, the rVQC will be the benchmark which all proposed blocks within known scenic areas will be evaluated. It is recommended that licensees use the rVQCs when planning how to manage and conserve the resource until such time as VQOs are formally established. The rVQCs are generally analogous to the former rVQOs.

### Percent Alteration

Based upon the Clearcutting and Visual Quality Study (1996), the following percent alteration ranges in Table 1 were derived for use in perspective view. These ranges are included in the Draft Visual Landscape management Guidebook to be released shortly.

Table 1 Percent Alteration ranges for each recommended Visual Quality Class (perspective view)

| rVQC/ rVQO        | % Alteration |
|-------------------|--------------|
| Preservation      | 0            |
| Retention         | 0-1.5        |
| Partial Retention | 1.6-7.0      |
| Modification      | 7.1-18.0     |
| Max Modification  | 18.1-30.0    |

In all cases forest operations should exhibit elements of good visual design and meet the spirit and intent of the basic definition to achieve a VQO. Percent alteration values are flexible and have been instituted to reduce the amount of damage created as a result of poor design or where there is a disregard for visual resource values. The percent alteration limits prescribed above may be exceeded if it can be demonstrated that the basic definition and design criteria have been met. Refer to the *Visual Landscape Design Training Manual* for information on how to meet fundamental concepts and principles of design, VQO definition and % alteration.

### Scenic Areas.

Scenic areas within the Lakes Forest District have been made known by the District Manager on two occasions, once on May 28 1996 , (original list of scenic areas) and on June 22 1998, identifying two levels of Scenic areas, Significant Visual and Visual areas. Significant Visual and Visual areas make up all areas under the Visual Landscape Inventory.

In the letter of June 22 1998, Licensees were informed that the District had incorporated some of the LRMPs zoning and associated management direction as being considered known information. Significant Visual and Visual areas had been originally referred to as Scenic and Visual Sensitive areas.

Significant visual areas are those areas that are of significance to public and or tourism and recreation users. They are of high to moderate sensitive for management of the visual resource. Management of this visual resource is to be based on the rVQC for the visual polygons associated with that scenic area.

Visual areas are those areas of lower visual value than significant visual areas, but are sensitive to forest development.

Over time, known scenic areas will be redefined to better represent the visual resource management priorities of the District. Based on current information a review and update of existing significant visual and visual areas along with some changes to rVQCs have been recently carried out for the District. See attached map showing update of these areas and revised list of significant visual areas.

This map shows all polygons that appeared on the previous visual inventory maps and distinction between visual significant and visual areas.

This management strategy, especially for visual areas will assist with the District buy-back strategy in mitigating some of the timber supply impact in scenic areas as well as adequately managing the visual resource.

### Evaluation of Visual Impacts

Until VQOs have been established the District manager cannot request a “Visual Impact Assessment”. However for scenic areas with rVQCs/rVQOs the District Manager may request that Licensee/ SBFEP submit a (VIA like submission) that evaluates the visual impact of cut blocks to ensure that the visual resource are being managed and conserved adequately ( FPC Sec.41(2)). This submission should contain the basic information as required in the Visual Impact Assessment Guidebook. The District manager may also request photographs, digital terrain models, visual simulations, sightlines, visual force analyses or other supporting information on which to base his decision, that the visual resource is being managed and conserved adequately. In some cases, where the prescribing forester determines that an evaluation need not be conducted to confirm that the proposal would meet the Visual Quality Class criteria ( design, definition, and % alteration), a rationale should be written to support this decision. This may be used in areas with Visual Quality Classes of Modification or Maximum Modification.

Base requirements for rVQCs ,Retention and Partial Retention may consist of ; visual force analysis, sightlines, digital terrain model, panoramic photographs from specified viewpoints, visual landscape inventory, viewpoints and view arrows, forest cover, topographic contours, Via guidebook table 2 information.

Base requirements for rVQC, Modification may consist of: visual force analysis, panoramic photographs from specified viewpoints and Via guidebook table 2 information. DTMs are optional.

Base requirements for rVQC Maximum Modification may consist of: visual force analysis, plan and perspective landform calculations and a map showing viewpoints.

Each VIA submission is unique and the onus is on both the District and Licensee/SBFEP to confirm with each other exactly what visual information, and when it is required for the particular VIA.

The evaluation will not be required until the SP stage, and then only at the request of the District Manager. The prescribing forester should include a statement in the SP that the SP is consistent with the results and recommendations of the assessment. In the case of the evaluation and the rationale, the acid test will be whether the proposal will meet the criteria of the rVQC.

If you have any questions about the scenic area designations or submission requirements, please contact Alex Bergen at (250)-692-3913.

Yours Truly

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District Manager  
Lakes Forest District

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