FOREST PRACTICES CODE

General Bulletin

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Finalization and Implementation of Regional Landscape Unit Planning Strategies

As the October 31, 1997 deadline for submission of Regional Landscape Unit Planning Strategies (RLUPS) draws near, region and district staff are requesting advice on key issues affecting the design and implementation of these important strategies. The following sections deal with the key issues that staff have raised to date.

1. Development of Regional Landscape Unit Planning Strategies

Purpose of the RLUPS

The purpose of the RLUPS is to position the Ministry of Forests and the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks so they can proceed with landscape unit planning in an organised and structured way. The RLUPS may be viewed as a work plan for districts and regions. Provincially, the regional strategies will serve as a valuable information and communication source. However, the beneficiaries should be districts and regions.

The RLUPS is a statement of intent and should be maintained and revised as new information and experience is gained. This is especially important since landscape unit objectives must be developed based on guidance from the RLUPS and, when established, be consistent with it.

Minimum content for RLUPS

Chief Forester direction states and the Ministers have publicly reiterated that the regional strategies will be completed by October 31st as the first step in landscape unit planning and to meet commitments on managing landscape level biodiversity. As per Chapter 5 of Higher Level Plans: Policy and Procedures, the RLUPS should contain the following:

- proposed landscape unit boundaries and associated rationale where required;
- either
  a) biodiversity emphasis for each landscape unit; or,
  b) draft emphasis presented to an LRMP table for further review to be ultimately approved by government in the final LRMP;

- scope of objectives in each landscape unit (e.g., biodiversity only or other resource values);
- scheduling for establishment of objectives by landscape unit or groups of units; and,
- a public participation strategy by landscape unit or group of units.

The role of headquarters strategic planning staff is to work cooperatively with regional representatives as they develop and maintain the RLUPS in order to provide policy interpretation and development support. Headquarters staff will continue to offer the same support as the strategies are implemented. It should be remembered that templates for the development of RLUPs have not been provided in order to allow the regions flexibility in developing strategies for LU development which will meet their needs. However, for the purposes of preparing a provincial summary and communicating results, it would be beneficial if each region would provide the following information that is derived from the approved RLUPS for their region:

- a map or maps of all proposed landscape units in the region (a 1:500 000 scale would be ideal if available);
- a table or tables listing for each landscape unit the name and/or number, size, BEO or recommended BEO, schedule for establishment, scope of objectives, and public participation method (if possible, please use Access or similar database software);
- other useful information, if available, would include a summary of the main resource values or characteristics of each landscape unit and a description of any land use zoning present.

Setting final biodiversity emphasis

There are two options for setting biodiversity emphasis.

1. They can be approved as a part of the RLUPS; or,
2. Alternatively, recommended biodiversity emphasis for units in an LRMP area, developed through the RLUPS, can be presented to the LRMP table to be ultimately approved by government in the final LPMP.

In the latter case, staff developing the RLUPS prepare recommended emphasis and, if possible, these recommendations should be included in the RLUPS document. When the LRMP concludes and the emphasis is selected, the RLUPS should be amended to include this new information.

If the LRMP process is scheduled to carry on for more than a year from October 31st, it is advisable to set the biodiversity emphasis assignments in the RLUPS and begin the objective development including the establishment of objectives. The LRMP table can revisit these decisions if necessary and recommend changes to government when it completes its work.

Conformity between operational plans and the RLUPS

Operational plans are only required to be consistent with landscape unit objectives that are established by the district manager pursuant to section 4(3) of the FPCBCA.

The RLUPS does not direct operational plans. It does contain useful information that may be considered in the development and approval of operational plans. For example, landscape units with a higher biodiversity emphasis should signal caution to both licensees and government in the development and approval of any Forest Development Plans that propose to harvest substantial proportions of old growth forest in the landscape unit.

Status of the recently circulated proposal for Chief Forester's direction on the involvement of IAMCs and the Public in the development of RLUPS

The Chief Forester acknowledges receipt of comments on the memo concerning the involvement of IAMCs and the public in the development of RLUPS and thanks reviewers for their comments. Feedback on the memo was for the most part positive and the direction will be incorporated into ongoing policy revisions rather than being an independent policy.

2. Implementation of Regional Landscape Unit Planning Strategies

Communication strategy following the October 31, 1997 deadline

The key message from government following the October 31, 1997 receipt of all regional strategies, will be that the regional strategies represent one of the most significant early steps in meeting government's commitment to manage for biodiversity generally and landscape level biodiversity specifically. The intent will be to present this new work as building on existing accomplishments for stand level biodiversity, protected areas and other initiatives contributing to the maintenance of biodiversity. The message will be broadly shared with all agencies, stakeholders, interest groups, and the public via a formal communication strategy. The RLUPS schedule will be an important component of the messaging as the Government communicates what is expected to be achieved in the future.

What will be the next steps following the October 31, 1997 deadline?

Via a formal announcement, government will acknowledge the completion of the regional strategies. The chief forester in co-operation with headquarters strategic planning staff will prepare feedback to each region on their strategy. The RLUPs will be summarised into a compendium document and returned to the regions for review and comment. The RLUPS summary will be presented to the Joint Management Committee, the Forest Practices Code Steering Committee, and executives from the two ministries.

Co-ordination and implementation will be enhanced through the creation of a landscape unit task force that will include both Forest Service and MOELP staff from the field level and headquarters. This task force has been approved by the Forest Practices Code Steering Committee. Staff are currently drafting a terms of reference and a work plan to be submitted to the FPC Joint Management Committee for approval.

Amendment of the landscape unit boundaries, the BEOs and the RLUPS

It is expected that significant iterative review has taken place prior to submission of the RLUPS, however, it is also recognized that as new inventory information is obtained, the RLUPS may have to be revisited. Any amendment to the RLUPS will have to follow a formal amendment procedure including approval of the amendments for the affected district by the District Manager. To be consistent with the current policy for RLUPS approval, it would also be appropriate to seek the agreement of the Designated Environment Official for any significant amendments. A copy of the amendment should be filed with the Regional Manager.

The expectations of stakeholders, interested groups and other agencies

Communication will be key to addressing expectations. The key message from both Ministries is that the provincial priority is for agency staff to develop landscape unit objectives for biodiversity. Objectives for other resource values will be established as limits on staff, information and funding permit. Delivery and implementation of the RLUPS will be in a range of years based on the associated schedule and assumptions regarding staffing, funding and inventory availability. Priority units will have objectives established soon, within a couple of years. Lower and medium priority units may take up to five years before objectives will be established.

Most landscape unit planning, particularly in the short term, will be a technical exercise with public involvement based on legislated requirements. This is to meet the pressing need to get management direction for landscape level biodiversity in place. Flexibility exists to expand this level of public involvement, but in the initial round of planning additional public involvement beyond legislated requirements is expected to apply to a limited number of landscape units.

3. Submission of Regional Landscape Unit Planning Strategies

Copies of the regional strategy should be filed in each Ministry of Forests regional office and district office. A copy should also be sent to the Chief Forester for his information.

4. Legislative Reference

- Section 4(l), 4(3) and 4(4) of the *Forest Practices Code of British Columbia Act;*
- Sections 4, 5, and 6 of the *Strategic Planning Regulation*
- Chapter 5, Section 5.8, Higher Level Plans: Policy and Procedures

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