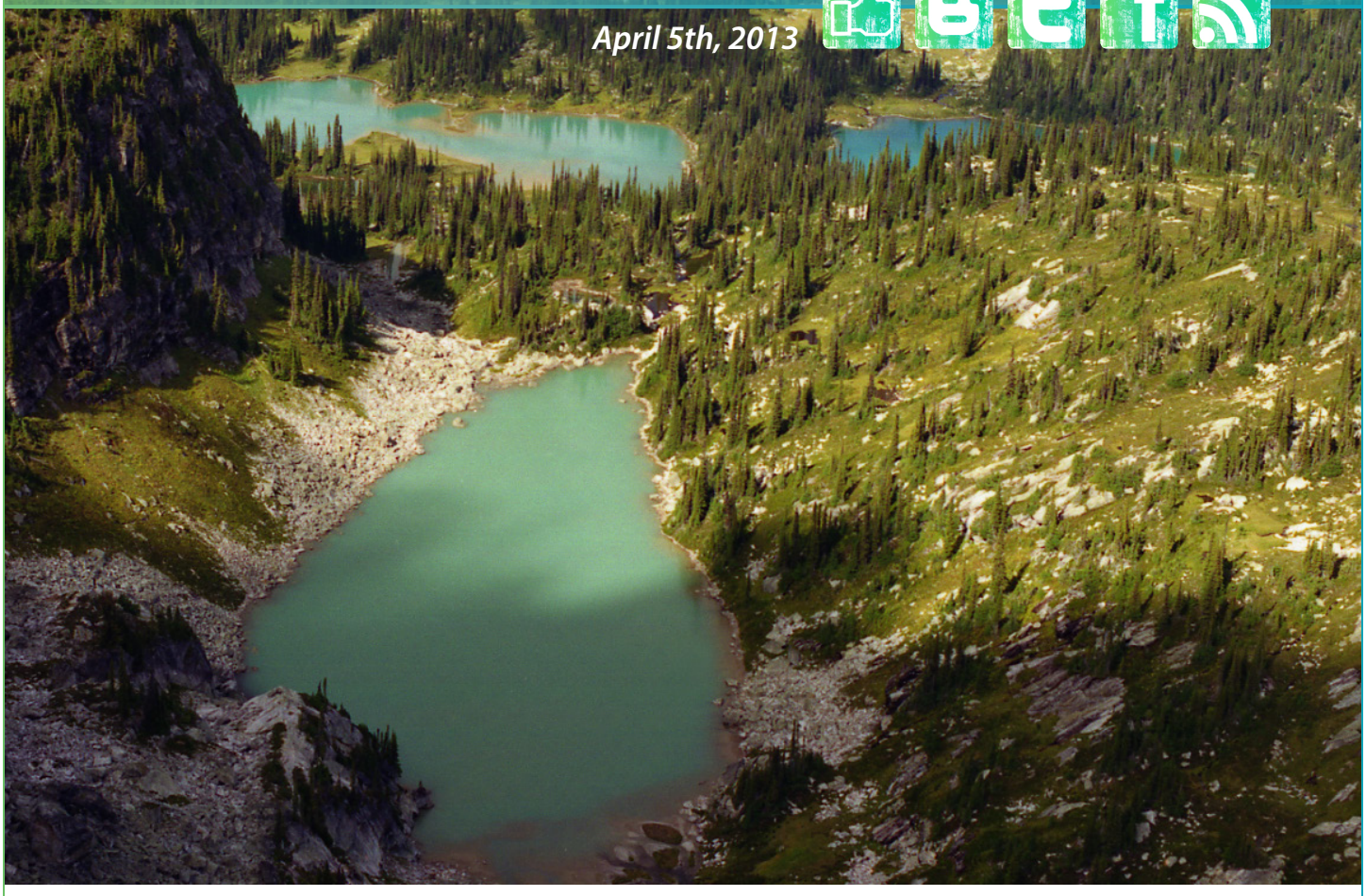
A MODERN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Sharing Knowledge and Ideas among First Nations, Communities, Stakeholders and the Province

April 5th, 2013



BRITISH COLUMBIA

Ministry of
Forests, Lands and
Natural Resource Operations

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Purpose

This document describes a new framework for the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (FLNR) to engage communities on natural resource issues and decisions. A modern engagement framework will help ensure timely and better-informed ministry decisions by strengthening existing engagement processes with First Nations, communities and stakeholders[1]. An effective engagement framework must be flexible in order to address a broad spectrum of topics and local circumstances.

One example of how the framework can be applied that is used throughout this document is in the delivery of the Ministry's *Mid-Term Timber Supply (MTTS) Action Plan*. The MTTS Action Plan addresses the recommendations of the Special Committee on Timber Supply including those related to land use planning, monitoring committees, sensitive areas and, more specifically, to the Burns Lake area. This engagement framework builds on the committee's recommendations to consider the feasibility of reestablishing monitoring committees, and presents a comprehensive and flexible approach to community engagement.

In addition to supporting the MTTS Action Plan, this framework can support many more FLNR initiatives such as landscape-level wildfire management planning and species management plans to name just a few.

It is important to note that this engagement framework does not replace existing FLNR statutory obligations to consult with the public and First Nations prior to making decisions but is designed to complement these existing processes.

Context

In September 2012, the BC Public Service's Natural Resource Sector (NRS) prepared the *2013-2014 Natural Resource Sector Transformation Plan*. The Plan brings together a cohesive view of the NSR's vision and business context, strengths and accomplishments in open data, public consultation and sector integration. The NRS vision is that BC's land base is managed in a coordinated and seamless way – ***"One Land Base, One Land Manager"*** – where NRS ministries are working together.

1 When this document refers to 'communities' alone in order to be brief, it means 'First Nations, communities and stakeholders' including the public

The modern engagement framework for FLNR described in this paper examines long-term opportunities for engaging First Nations, communities and stakeholders in natural resource management consistent with the NRS Transformation Plan. One of the five key issues identified in the Transformation Plan relates to engagement:

Technology Advances and Changing Citizen Needs and Expectations *– The rapid pace of technological advancement and changing needs and expectations of citizens continues to influence how public services are delivered. This includes how we gather information and data and make it available, how we deliver current services and how we interact and engage with citizens and stakeholders to shape the design and delivery of future services.*

In the past, a variety of mechanisms were employed to engage the public, ranging from use of information tools, to periodic events like open houses, convening focus groups, workshops or round table forums.

These mechanisms are still in use today, and are being enhanced by new engagement tools enabled by the move to "open government" and electronic media. By adopting open government approaches, the Province is committed to making government data and information more available, and is endeavoring to improve online interactions, both internally between agencies and externally with British Columbians.

The Province is moving towards a modern engagement framework using the best available technology, including internet-based tools and applications such as blogs, Twitter and YouTube.

What is Community Engagement?

Community engagement is a process of involving, at various levels of participation, groups of citizens affiliated by geographic proximity to address issues affecting the well being of those citizens. The process is based on interpersonal communication, respect and trust, and a common understanding and purpose. It strengthens the capacity of communities to take action that produces positive and sustainable changes locally, promotes and facilitates community participation, and fosters collaboration across government agencies and throughout the community in relation to issues affecting quality of life.

The community engagement framework outlined in this document is designed to complement FLNR's existing processes with respect to fulfilling its statutory obligations to consult with the public and First Nations prior to making decisions. It is important to note that the engagement framework does not replace existing FLNR processes in place today, and also that community engagement is a voluntary process.

Assumptions

The assumptions below underscore why a modern engagement framework is needed:

1. An open dialogue among all parties is necessary to more fully address economic, social and environmental challenges facing British Columbians.
2. The Province has statutory authority for making resource management decisions on Crown lands and Crown-owned subsurface resources.
3. Responsible resource managers inform decision making by sharing information and views broadly with affected or interested parties. Incorporating the results of meaningful public discussions leads to better decisions.
4. The 'public' refers to a wide array of potentially interested or affected parties and individuals, the complexity of which must be accommodated in the design of engagement processes.
5. First Nations have a government-to-government relationship with the Province that must be built into the decision-making processes.
6. Government must act as a convener, facilitator, enabler and partner in consultation processes.
7. Technology and social media, and in particular web-based collaboration and communication tools and applications, can help government increase the scope and extend the reach of engagement as a new opportunity for effective public discussion.

Engagement Objectives

- To build more trust and credibility about engagement with First Nations, communities and stakeholders.
- To promote and support clear, concise, and consistent communication that responds to questions about engagement from all interested parties.
- To improve resource management decision-making.
- In the short term, to support implementation of the MTTS Action Plan by providing communities with alternative approaches and tools for engaging with FLNR, for example, on the review of land use objectives and sensitive areas.

Guiding Principles

These principles are intended to guide implementation of the community engagement process:

- ***Respect:*** valuing the inherent worth, diversity and abilities of all individuals and community groups, and respecting their interest in meaningful engagement to contribute to the Ministry's decision-making process.
- ***Transparency:*** supporting a transparent process that clearly states at the outset the specific objectives and expectations about what can and cannot be influenced, the constraints or boundaries within which the Ministry is operating, and the level of commitment that is being asked from participants, particularly in terms of time.
- ***Inclusive participation:*** embracing the diversity of the community impacted by an issue by striving to use engagement methods that are inclusive and accessible; making efforts to reach out to communities to enable them to participate in a meaningful way. All parties with a significant interest in the issue should have an opportunity to be involved in community engagement processes.
- ***Information for participation:*** supporting meaningful participation in engagement opportunities by sharing with participants information and communication that is objective, clear, sufficient, timely, and in appropriate formats as required.
- ***Appropriate timelines:*** planning engagement for the earliest point possible, and ensure timelines are realistic for the level of engagement appropriate to the situation and respectful of the communities being engaged. Adequate time must be available for engagement to be effective.
- ***Organizational capacity:*** acknowledging the need for adequate financial, human and technical resources in order for engagement efforts to be successful. The Ministry must have access to appropriate guidance, tools and training as well as an organizational culture that supports their efforts.
- ***Responsiveness:*** recognizing the need for decision-makers to be responsive to community engagement and to publicly report on how community input has been used in the decision-making process.
- ***Evaluation:*** measuring whether community engagement efforts are meeting engagement objectives, and sharing promising and best practices in order to improve future engagement practices.

Levels of Engagement

The engagement levels described below are not intended to be rigidly applied but rather support a scalable approach whereby the intensity and scope of engagement varies depending on local circumstances or conditions.

Figure 1 below illustrates criteria to consider when selecting the level of public engagement needed to address land use-related issues in the MTTS Action Plan. The 'Risk to Values' criterion refers to the risk associated with potential impacts to values, for example, due to changes in land use plans, resource management objectives or sensitive areas. The "Opportunity or Need to Update Objectives" criterion refers to legal resource management objectives or objectives set in land use plans. Appropriate criteria can be developed to support other issues.

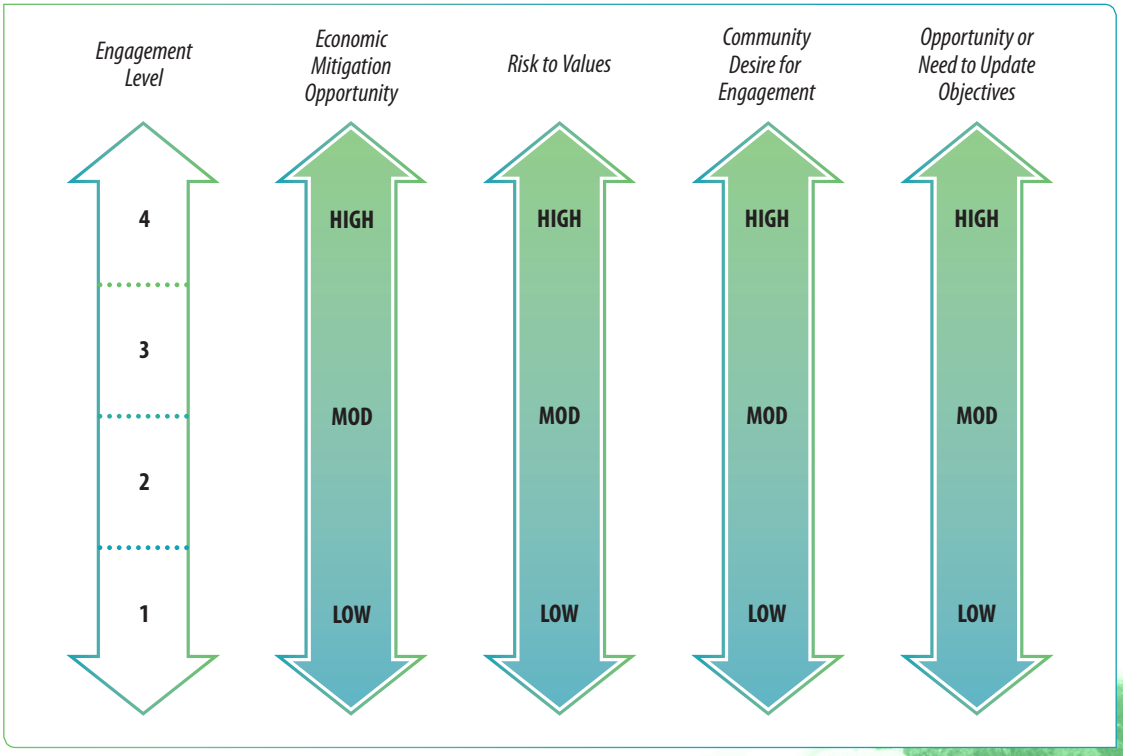
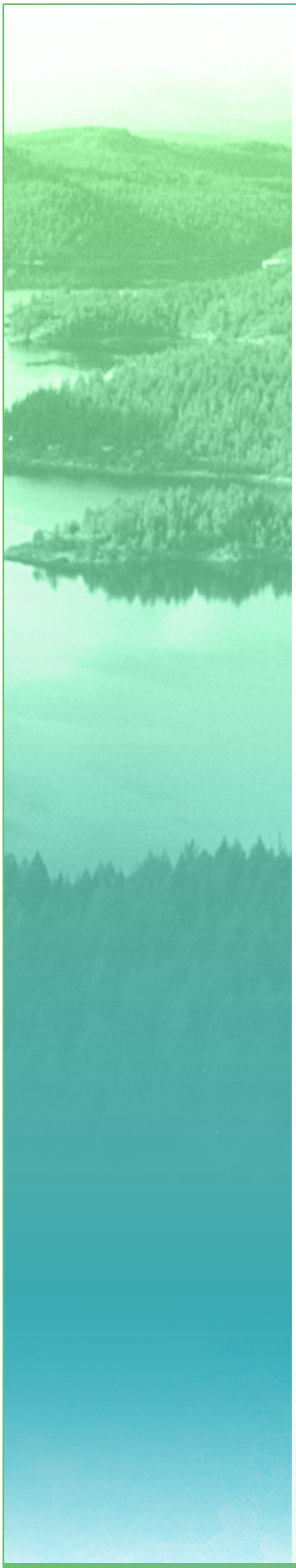


FIGURE 1: *Criteria to Select Level of Public Engagement*



LEVEL 1: *Sharing information*

To share with First Nations, community and stakeholders accurate, timely, relevant and easy to understand information (e.g. about implementation decisions regarding FLNR's MTTS Action Plan). This level is the most basic form of community engagement. On its own it offers no further involvement, however it is the foundation for successive levels of engagement to occur. Information assists the community in understanding issues, alternatives, and/or possible solutions, and increases their capacity to effectively contribute in successive levels of engagement.

Examples:

- FLNR explaining proposed science-based review process for sensitive areas and related engagement opportunities
- Providing technical assessments of the impacts of the MPB epidemic on natural resource values
- Providing information to support landscape-level wildfire management planning
- Providing information on Timber Supply Review timber supply forecasts for particular management units.

Level 1 Methods:

- Website tightly linked to social media tools[2]
- Social media tools, including blogs, listserves and when appropriate, using the government news twitter account with the appropriate hashtags which has a large following and reach
- Brochures, newsletters, letters, flyers and mail-outs
- Notifications or articles in local newspaper or electronic media
- Face-to-face meetings, with or without an online component, such as webinars

2 See Appendix 2 for 'Considerations for Using Technology and Social Media in resource Planning and Consultation Processes' prepared by Tim Mock, TM NewMedia Inc.

LEVEL 2: *Consultation*

To actively seek and obtain First Nation, community and stakeholder response (views and options) before a decision is made by FLNR. FLNR will consider communities' views as one important source of input that helps inform the final decision. FLNR will report back on how community feedback is used in the decision-making process.

Examples:

- FLNR initiating a dialogue about the results from the science-based review of sensitive areas with a focus on community feedback
- FLNR seeking community feedback through Timber Supply Review Discussion Papers
- Review and consultation about proposed orders under regulation

Level 2 Methods:

- E-engagement and social media tools as noted above
- Interviews, with an option to record and post to a Youtube channel and link to the website and social media pages
- Feedback forms or questionnaires, including the use of online delivery, response and summaries
- Surveys, including online polls using tools such as Survey Monkey
- Documents/discussion papers
- Stakeholder meetings including, if appropriate, the streaming or recording of these for broad distribution and later viewing
- Public meetings or forums, with possible online components, such as webinars

LEVEL 3: *Planning Together*

To collaborate or partner with First Nations, communities and stakeholders in identifying or analyzing issues, developing alternatives and identifying preferred solutions. For example, if level 2 consultations associated with the MTTS Action Plan indicate there is an informed need for changing land use plans, resource management objectives and/or sensitive areas and if there is general support to proceed to a process to revise, FLNR could initiate a specified process using level 3.

Examples:

- Related to the MTTS Action Plan, FLNR planning with First Nations, the community and stakeholders to determine if there is general consensus about what changes, if any, should be made to sensitive areas in consideration of the science-based review
- Marine use planning

LEVEL 4: *Acting Together*

To collaborate or partner with First Nations, the community and stakeholders in implementing the preferred solution. For example, if a level 3 process was initiated to support delivery of the MTTS Action Plan, and changes were recommended and accepted regarding sensitive areas, that process could move to a level 4 to support implementation of those decisions.

Examples:

- Related to the MTTS Action Plan, review and consultation about proposed orders under *Government Actions Regulation* that are made to implement decisions about sensitive areas
- Implementing the Central and North Coast Strategic Land Use Planning Agreements

Level 3 and 4 Methods:

- E-engagement and social media tools as noted above
- Stakeholder meetings, including again the use of recording and/or streaming tools
- Seminars or workshops, including the use of webinars or podcasts
- In-depth interviews and discussions, recorded if appropriate for wider distribution via social media pages
- Advisory forums, recorded or streamed for wider distribution

- Engagement levels 2, 3 and 4 could be designed to take advantage of web-based collaboration tools as a way to allow more people, especially those remotely located, to participate directly in the engagement process. Live online events, such as webinars, offer an opportunity for many to listen in and to ask questions or respond directly.

Likewise, blogs, organized by topic and without commenting, offer one alternative to creating a bulletin board for posting information, news and progress, and with commenting turned on, an opportunity for asynchronous dialogue and collaboration to occur.

Delivery of the Engagement Framework

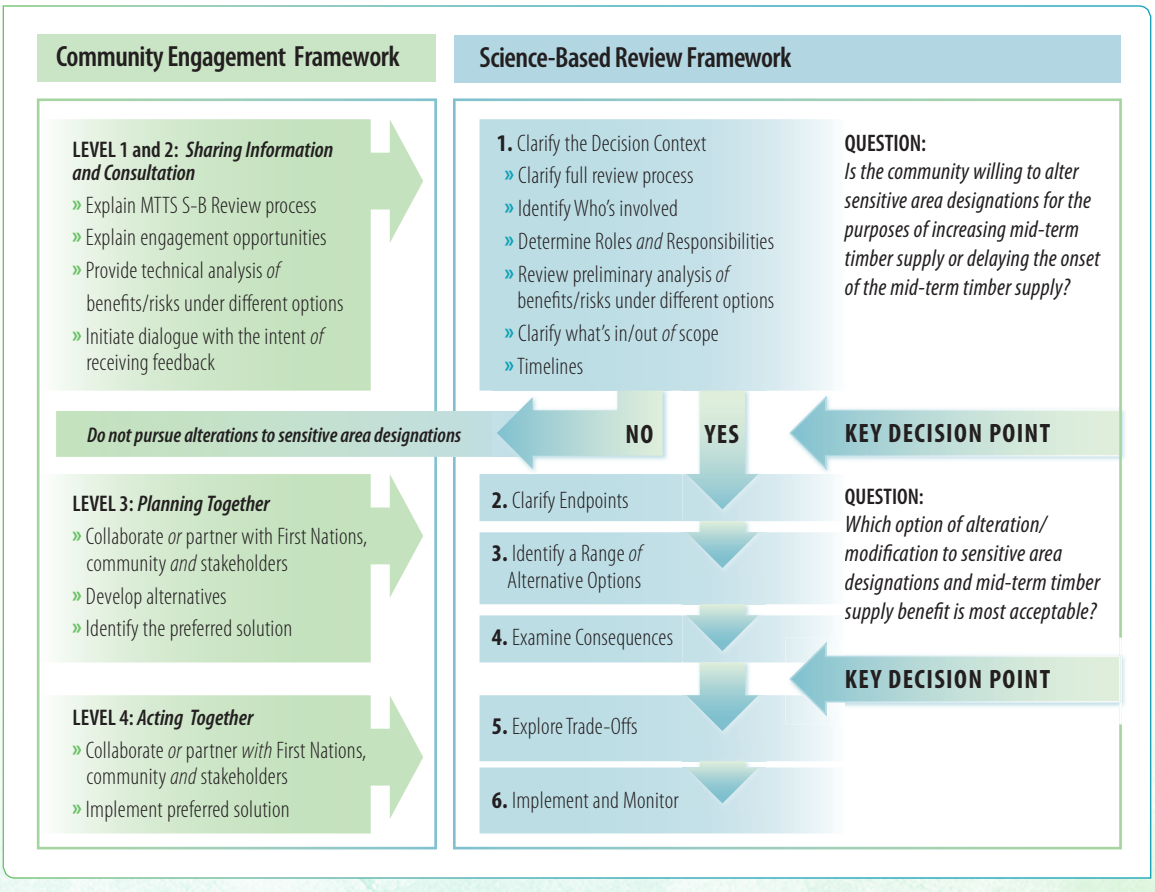
Outreach to First Nations, communities and stakeholders on the Engagement Framework will begin once the Framework is released. The outreach process on the Framework will include:

1. Share the approved Engagement Framework with communities in the area addressed by the MTTS Action Plan.
2. Monitor the response and use of the Framework in management units covered by the MTTS Action Plan.
3. Revise the Framework, if necessary, considering feedback received.
4. Continually improve the Framework based on on-going use and feedback.

The Framework would be considered a 'living document' that would get revised as needed based on experience and use. Revisions would be made in an orderly manner to reduce confusion, and clearly labeled and dated (e.g., v.1, v.2).

APPENDIX 1: *Applying the Framework – Sensitive Areas Example*

- This example is in the context of the MTTS Action and is provided to help illustrate how the Framework can be applied.
- FLNR informs the public on status for those management units (level 1) where a science-based review of sensitive areas is an option.
- FLNR completes homework (review using science-based framework) on key issues (potential for sensitive areas to change) and engages with communities on results of the review (level 2). That will include the assessment of whether any changes to sensitive areas would create a noticeable gain in timber supply and if so, which sensitive areas and on what basis (ditches in the road).
- If level 2 engagement indicates there is an informed need for changing sensitive areas and if there is general public support to proceed to a process to revise, FLNR would initiate a specified process using level 3. This would not necessarily be a "standing forum" but could be a time limited and targeted mechanism such as focus group, workshops, etc.
- If the statutory decision maker has made changes to sensitive areas, level 4 engagement might include a time-bound agreement on monitoring the results of the changes and a process for future amendments.



APPENDIX 2: *Considerations for Using Technology and Social Media in Resource Planning and Consultation Processes*[3]

BLOGGING

Description

Blogging refers to the creation of discrete entries of information displayed via the Internet usually in reverse chronological order. Below are some general characteristics of blogs:

- Can include text, images, audio, video.
- Often contain links to other more detailed information such as PDF documents, or other web resources.
- Usually less than two pages in length – longer information is often provided through eBooks or PDFs.
- Provides the reader an opportunity to subscribe to the blog – allowing the reader the option of receiving an email notification, or using an RSS feed to display new posts.
- Blog content is often created in another software package such as Word, and then transferred to the blog through cut and paste functions.
- The blog site application usually provides a hypertext markup language (HTML) editor which is a WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) editor that allows those who are not familiar with HTML programming, the opportunity to create text, format text, add images and add links. The final product is converted automatically to HTML for the web.
- Blog sites usually organize their postings through the use of categories or topics which provides a way for the reader to find information pertinent to their needs.
- Blogs differ from static website pages in that they often allow for commenting by authenticated readers (signed in with an email address, for example). The commenting function may be turned on or off depending on the goals of the blog post. Blog threads often occur where other readers can reply to comments others have left on the site – creating a dialogue.
- Blogs usually contain a 'teaser' – summarized information – that can be easily shared through other social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter.

3 Prepared by Tim Mock, TM NewMedia Inc.

Using Blogs for Sharing Information

One of the most effective, and straightforward uses of blogs is the presentation of information for consumption on the Internet. The blog can be used to present information in clear, effective manner and be enriched with the incorporation of images, well-formatted text, video, audio, and links to other resources. This makes a blog a highly effective platform for the dissemination of content. There are, however, uses for which blogs are clearly not the most effective tool for sharing information. For example when:

- There is a large volume of static content where the likelihood of change is low. This content is better treated through the creation of PDFs or eBooks, or if it is necessary to have all of the content in HTML, through a website.
- There is a necessity for authenticated visitors to the site to alter the actual text – for example the use of collaborative document creation. Wikis or Google Docs are alternatives that work better in this use case.

Using Blogs for Consultation

Blogs often use commenting as a way to engage their readers. Commenting can be turned on or off for a particular blogging site, with various options for their administration:

- Enable/disable the ability to comment.
- Optional requirement to approve comments before publishing to site.
- Ability to edit/delete/reply-to comments on the site.
- Consider having a subject matter expert available (preferably independent in the eye of public/stakeholder if a controversial topic) to facilitate a particular blog thread (e.g., a timber supply expert posting information and responding to comments on the blog thread relating to TSR)

Some best practices for using Blogs for consultation are:

- Write guidelines for commenting on the site. Clearly describe the purpose/use of the comments, and the guidelines for participation – especially regarding comments that would be deleted and why. The tone should encourage the sharing of diverse opinions.
- In Blog posts, ask open-ended questions that facilitate commenting.
- Try not to include too wide a range of concepts or topics within a post. Keep the writing brief, using bullets and formatting to provide summarized information. If more explanation is needed, place this content in a document that the reader can download and read.
- Allow the users of the site to do most of the monitoring for inappropriate commenting. This is most effectively done through the use of 'flagging,' which allows a reader to flag a comment as inappropriate. The administrator of the blog is then sent an email alerting them to the flagged content. This content can then be evaluated by the administrator and removed if appropriate.

- Replying to every comment on the site is unnecessary. Allow the community to do most of the commenting. Do, however, stay engaged and reply to direct questions in which the ministry is the most appropriate source for the answer to the question. Another time to reply to comments is when there is misinformation that could be clarified.
- Use other social media channels such as Twitter and Facebook to drive interested parties to the blog sites and invite them to join the conversation.
- Another way to gather information from readers is through the use of short online surveys. Although these are not typically created within a blog, the intention, description and instructions for taking the survey can be included within a blog post while including a link to an externally created survey – for example Survey Monkey. Posting the survey information within a blog while using an external survey tool for the collection of data uses the best of both tools. Results from surveys can then be posted to subsequent blog posts to inform stakeholders of results.

Using Blogs for Planning Together

Although blogs are not a good option for collaborative document creation, they are an excellent option for posting outcomes of various stages of planning and garnering feedback from stakeholders on the proposed outcomes, decisions, or recommendations. By posting meeting notes and summaries (Powerpoints from a special presentation, with or without associated audio, or video recording of an event), consultation outcomes, and recommendations relating to discrete blog postings, and asking questions that invite feedback, stakeholders can comment on specific aspects of the plan.

TWITTER

Description

Twitter is a micro-blogging platform used to post small or 'micro' content to the Internet.

Twitter has the following characteristics:

- 'Tweets' can contain 140 characters or less
- Can include links to images, videos, documents, web addresses, or blog posts.
- Often used to increase awareness of events, new information, new blog posts, or new engagement activities (such as online surveys).
- Hashtags (#) are used to tag tweets and allow for searching of tweets based on these hashtags – example #pinebeetle. Many Twitter users create saved searches that follow a particular hashtag. They are then notified when anyone posts a tweet that is tagged with the hashtag they are following.
- Twitter has the ability to 'Follow' and be followed by other organisations or individuals. This is a way to view all Tweets from an individual or an organization. There is also an option to 'Unfollow' when tweets from the individual or organization are not relevant, or outside of the engagement guidelines established.

Twitter for Sharing Information

Due to the constraining size of a 'Tweet', it is not a good tool for transmitting anything except very small amounts of content, but it is very useful for a variety of functions including:

- As a way to connect to others and provide links back to information on a website or blog.
- Notification of events such as public hearings and decision timelines.
- Providing links to Internet resources pertinent to current issues.

Twitter for Consultation & Planning

Although some people use twitter for conversation by replying to tweets from others, it is not the most effective way to discuss a topic. Other tools such as blog comments, or a discussion forum are far more effective for this purpose. Rather, consider using twitter to:

- Announce meetings (online or face-to-face) to promote awareness and engagement at these events.
- Tweet links to information gathering tools such as online surveys, or invitations to comment on a blog posting.
- Provide short descriptions of outcomes of various public discussions in order to provide feedback to a broader audience.
- Tweet invitations to provide feedback on a particular plan or preliminary plan with a link included pointing to the central site (perhaps a blog) where comments can be captured and dialogue can occur.
- Follow key stakeholders (if they have a twitter account), to view Tweets of interest.

It will be important to set up criteria for who you will follow and the monitoring of postings, so that they can be 'unfollowed' if postings fall outside of agreed upon expectations.

FACEBOOK

Description

Facebook is the most popular social networking tool. The audience is vast, and this platform is being used for a variety of engagement activities by non-profit, for-profit, and public organisations.

Most of Facebook's functionality is surrounding individual user accounts, but recently there has been a growing use of Facebook as a platform for public consultations through the use of a Facebook 'Page'. A Facebook Page allows for the creation of a timeline where information, including text, links to websites/blogs, images, and links to documents are posted in a reverse chronological order (see *https://www.facebook.com/pages/Legislative-Assembly-of-British-Columbia-Committees/157086584375374* as an example).

Some functions of Facebook are:

- Ability to enable/disable commenting with each post.
- Posts to the timeline can be 'liked', commented on, or shared on the users own Facebook timeline.
- Ability of the user to send a private message to the page owner.
- Ability to create 'lists' of people that may view particular posts to the timeline.
- Ability to add 'Milestones' or major events for the organization.

Facebook for Information Sharing

Like Twitter, Facebook does not lend itself well to posting lengthy content. It is much more effective for the posting of small 'teasers' that will draw the reader to follow a link to the full blog posting, webpage content, PDF or eBook. Some suggestions for using Facebook in public consultation are:

- As a way to connect to a broad public and provide links back to information on a website or blog.
- To provide notification (date, time, location, etc) of events such as public meetings.
- To provide information on key decision timelines.
- To provide links to Internet resources pertinent to current issues.
- Creation of 'Milestones' to mark key events in the processes of the project.

Facebook for Consultation and Planning

Facebook has default settings that allow anyone with a Facebook account to post a comment or reply to a comment on the page. These can be disabled if comments are not appropriate for the use of the Page. The same guidelines as mentioned in the Blogging section above are applicable to Facebook comments.

Facebook could be used to:

- Announce meetings (online or face-to-face) to promote engagement at these information gatherings.
- Post links to information gathering tools such as online surveys, or invitations to comment on a blog posting.
- Provide short descriptions of outcomes of various public discussions in order to provide feedback to a broader audience.
- Post invitations to provide feedback on a particular plan or preliminary plan. This is most effectively achieved when it includes a link to a central site (perhaps blog) where comments can be captured and dialogue can occur.
- 'Like' key stakeholders' pages if they have a Facebook Page.
- Enable the Twitter App to allow page visitors to click on a link to the associated Twitter account.

TOOLS FOR ENHANCING SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT

Expectations and Effective Communication

Modern web and wireless media consumers have a plethora of media options available to them as they consume content over the web and on wireless today. Advances in media codecs, Internet and wireless networks, and receiving technologies have made it commonplace for video, audio and other forms of rich content to be delivered to handheld, tablet and desktop devices where ever networks are enabled. In public consultation processes there may be valid reasons to consider using some of these rich media options, but the communication value must warrant the added cost of providing them.

Video versus Audio

Video, audio and text/graphics offer the user a range of experience, from seeing, to hearing, to seeing and hearing. Video, PowerPoint slide shows with sound, and similar sound and moving image options offer the highest level of richness. This communication benefit may be off-set by the limited flexibility, on the part of the viewer, to pace the rate at which they receive the information. With reading a page, the reader determines the speed, with video and audio, this ability to manage the pace is hampered and reduced to pausing and replaying. The key benefit of video and audio is the richness of the experience and the associated engagement factor it provides the viewer/listener. This can be especially valuable when you want them to stay-with-you to get through and to understand a block of content.

Video and Audio for Information Sharing

Video and audio can enhance the presentation of information, especially complicated or complex information. The quality of the video and audio hinges to a large degree on the quality of the presentation itself, both in terms of the presenter and the quality of the recording – a poor quality video or inaudible audio file does little to enhance communications. The cost of preparing rich media options must be weighed against the potential benefit likely to be received. Some suggestions for using audio and video in information sharing situations include:

- Recording and posting subject matter experts (SMEs) delivering a PowerPoint covering key information, important to consultations.
- Posting videos which have key relevance to the consultations; these may exist or if not, would need to be created at a cost that is consistent with their communication value (e.g., short field video showing the VQO impacts that are on the table).

Video and Audio for Consultation and Planning

Video and audio can facilitate the sharing of a consultation processes with people who were unable to attend a 'live' session. In these situations, they allow the recording and wide distribution of an event such as a meeting or consultation. In these settings, interested publics may place a high value on hearing what was said by whom, over simply reading the summary document and it may be cheaper to produce than a full Hansard style transcript. Again, the value of this must be weighed against the cost.

An alternative approach, instead of posting a recording following a session, is to live stream the session while it is taking place. This synchronous approach can be accomplished with sophisticated applications such as Live Meeting and with simpler, free applications such as Join.Me, anyMeeting, or Vyew. These live broadcasts, or if appropriate, virtual meetings where all of the participants are accessing the meeting online, can be set up for one way communications, where listeners cannot respond, or two-way communications where listeners are given an opportunity to ask questions (voice or text), or responds to questions with polling features. These tools offer increased access and interaction for participants in the right setting, but must be considered carefully with costs/benefits in mind. Some suggestions for using video and audio on consultation and planning include:

- Presenting online, the same content which may be delivered to contextualize a planning session (e.g., PowerPoint, audio/video recording, or SlideShare presentation)
- Recording and posting entire planning or consultation sessions
- Bringing visual information to a session from the field (e.g., VQO settings)
- Posting recordings of virtual meetings for interested parties unable to attend a meeting.