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Translating Climate Futures into Management Guidance: making practical decisions in the face of tremendous uncertainty

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Abstract

One of the many challenges in addressing climate change goes beyond understanding how it may impact forest ecosystems to translate what could happen into useful guidance for decision-makers. Many vulnerability assessments paint a broad picture of potential climate scenarios and ecosystem responses. Some assessment reports offer a broad array of possible options in responding to those impacts. However the challenge is then how to use the information generated through these assessments to provide guidance to help managers and decision-makers understand which actions they should select.

To improve management utility, the [Kamloops Future Forest Strategy](#) Project (K2) project developed a suite of models around tree regeneration, stand development, and forest growth incorporating climate change and management assumptions calibrated to a region within the Kamloops TSA. These models allowed us to develop future climate scenarios and project possible outcomes and then explore the impact of different management actions that then can be used to inform policy and management. I will offer some examples from the K2 experience, highlighting how we arrived at particular management guidance, and the role models can play in assisting managers and decision-makers while realistically recognizing the uncertainty associated with climate change.

Biography

Dr. Harry Nelson is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Forestry at UBC specializing in forest policy and economics. His main area of recent research has been on how climate change may impact forests in Canada, and ways we can adapt our management and policy framework to address those impacts. Harry also studied extensively how current institutional arrangements (such as tenure agreements and stumpage systems) in Canada influence:

- how we manage our forests;
- economic conditions under which firms operate; and,
- decision-making and activities.

Harry Nelson co-led the K2 project with Ken Zielke of Symmetree Consulting Group.