

FRPA Resource Evaluation Program: Activities at the Regional and District Level

Discussion Paper

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Background

This discussion paper is intended to stimulate meaningful dialogue concerning how the FRPA Resource Evaluation Program (FREP) should be developed and implemented. In the coming months, regional representatives on the FRPA Resource Evaluation Working Group (FREWG) will be discussing FREP, and this document, with district staff. Input from these discussions, will help guide future district involvement in both district-level stewardship monitoring and the FRPA Resource Evaluation Program.

District and regional stewardship monitoring activities are envisaged as an integral component of FREP. However, because the policy framework is still being developed, exactly how FREP will integrate with regional and district programs, and the nature of the work required of staff at all levels, is not yet fully determined. As a result, one of the primary objectives of this document is to present a model that could facilitate integration at all levels.

For additional information on FREP, please contact your regional representative or any other member of FREWG (see page 6 of this document for a list of names and contact numbers).

1.0 Introduction

The *Forest and Range Practices Act* (FRPA) is intended to achieve environmentally sound, innovative, and cost-effective forest and range practices. To determine whether forest and range policies and practices in British Columbia are achieving government's objectives for the resource values identified in FRPA, the Ministries of Forests (MOF), Water, Land and Air Protection (MWLAP) and Sustainable Resource Management (MSRM) established the FRPA Resource Evaluation Program (FREP).

FREP is currently overseen by FREWG, a working group comprised of representatives of the three MOF forest regions, Forest Practices Branch, Research Branch, Resource Tenures and Engineering Branch, and the Ministries of Water, Land and Air Protection and Sustainable Resource Management (MSRM). In October 2003, the FREP Charter outlining a framework for the evaluation program was endorsed by the FRPA Joint Management Committee (JMC) and approved by the Chief Forester.

The objectives of the FRPA Resource Evaluation Program are:

- Evaluate the status or trends of resource values and determining causal factors;
- Determine whether resource values are being managed in a sustainable manner through proven or alternative forest practices;
- Communicate the results of evaluations; and
- Recommend options for changes to forest and range policies, practices and legislation, where required.

To achieve these objectives, the following activities will be conducted:

1. Identify and rank evaluation questions that need addressing;
2. Develop cost-effective and efficient indicators and protocols;
3. Implement effectiveness evaluation and stewardship monitoring activities at various levels (provincial, regional and district) to answer priority questions; and
4. Develop options and recommendations for changes to legislation and policy, and present those to senior management, including the JMC and the Chief Forester.

While district (site-level) stewardship monitoring (primarily carried out by districts and regions) is one tool to achieving the goals of FREP, the results of monitoring will also be used for purposes complementary to FREP. For example stewardship monitoring results may provide a valuable basis for dialogue with regional I-teams and non-government professionals to facilitate continuous improvement (e.g., practices and/or FSP results and strategies).

In carrying out its activities, FREP will focus on evaluating and monitoring environmental outcomes, but will also evaluate social and economic outcomes, where appropriate. Provincial-level effectiveness evaluations will primarily concentrate on addressing priority resource value issues on a project basis. It is envisioned that evaluation teams consisting of branch and regional staff will normally conduct effectiveness evaluations; while stewardship monitoring activities will be generally conducted by district staff with support from regions.

A complementary stewardship monitoring program will be managed out of each region and district through a coordinated program that will determine what gets evaluated based on local needs and concerns. Evaluation and monitoring activities at the regional and district level, particularly monitoring the results of FSPs and trends in resource stewardship, will play a critical role in the overall evaluation of FRPA, and be linked to provincial FREP activities. Figure 1 illustrates the linkages, objectives of the various levels within FREP. Shaded boxes detail general objectives for each level (district, region and provincial), while the bullets below each shaded box list the primary roles and responsibilities.

FREWG will provide evaluation and monitoring indicators and methodologies, as well as sampling protocols and procedures for planning, conducting and reporting evaluation and monitoring activities, to forest regions and districts. FREWG, will work with representatives from Regional Business Area #2 teams and field staff when developing stewardship monitoring products to ensure these protocols meet district needs and promote consistency in collecting data and reporting of findings.

Ideally, FREP will use regional and district data to help interpret and extrapolate stewardship monitoring results across broad geographic areas of the province. The accuracy, integrity and reliability of the data collected are critical. To support this, quality assurance protocols will be developed by FREWG. Branch, regional and district monitoring staff may benefit from quality assurance training once sampling protocols are developed. Quality assurance training on sampling protocols and procedures will facilitate accurate and consistent data collection, analysis and reporting of FRPA effectiveness monitoring and evaluations.

District/region-level monitoring will predominately be of a routine or extensive nature, however, there will also be a need to carry out intensive reviews of some practices when determining the sustainability or acceptability of the practice. Routine evaluations are relatively general evaluations that use simple visual estimates or measurements, often to answer yes/no type questions. Routine evaluations usually sample at a lower level of intensity, and may use checklists or categorical data collection. An example is the MOF riparian checklist for Proper Functioning condition used for range management.

Extensive evaluations are generally more quantitative – usually in the form of categorical data collection through visual estimation or more detailed measurements than for routine evaluations. An extensive evaluation could use similar checklists as a routine evaluation, but with higher frequency of data collection in a given area. An example is the Forest Practices Board study, “Effect of Cattle Grazing on Riparian Areas.”

Intensive evaluations are usually a more detailed examination than extensive evaluations, most often involving quantitative measurements for attributes or categorical data. These data when collected on a repeated schedule over time will allow detection of long-term trends. Due to the collection of more detailed quantitative data, intensive evaluations are generally more time consuming and expensive. An example is the MOF/WLAP study, “Evaluation of wildlife tree retention for cutblocks harvested between 1996–2001 under the Forest Practices Code.”

Depending on the resource values, some monitoring projects may be short term and others long term. For example, impacts to some resource values may occur immediately after harvesting (e.g., visual quality), while impacts to other values may not occur for some time (e.g., forest regeneration).

There are several evaluation-related linkages to FREP that are important to consider. These linkages include LRMP monitoring, the state of the forest report and forest management certification. LRMP monitoring will be led by MSRM. At this time the process and timing for LRMP monitoring is being determined by MSRM regional monitoring teams. The state of the forest (SOF) report is based on reporting the status and trends of high-level indicators such as the amount of old-growth forest by biogeoclimatic zone. The results of stewardship monitoring and effectiveness evaluations will produce valuable information on the status and trends of FRPA resource values, which may be used for future SOF reports. The various forest management certification schemes used in BC are based on monitoring environmental indicators. These indicators vary amongst the various certification schemes.

A goal of FREP is to ensure minimal duplication of effort between the various evaluation and monitoring initiatives. Where possible, the indicators used within FREP will be complementary to, or in some cases, the same as, those used in LRMP monitoring, SOF reporting and/or forest management certification. Efforts to communicate and coordinate with the various initiatives are currently underway.

2.0 Region and District Roles

Monitoring activities at the regional and district level will likely include:

- Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of FSP results, strategies, and associated practices, including alternative forest management strategies;
- Using monitoring results to improve the district manager's evidentiary requirements for future FSPs that contain similar proposed results and strategies;
- Identifying resource stewardship issues that require follow-up analysis and resolution by the district, region, or regional I-team;
- Identifying resource value/sub-value trends within each region;
- Identifying and recommending topics for evaluation under FREP, and leading or assisting in these evaluations; and
- Recommending options to improve forest practices by modifying guidelines or best management practices, policies, legislation or training.

The above activities, particularly monitoring the results of FSPs and trends in resource stewardship, will provide critical information in the overall evaluation of FRPA's success.

Monitoring priorities at the regional and district level will be driven by:

- The district's mandate to support FSP determinations;
- Provincial and regional evaluation priorities;
- Resource value trends and issues identified through monitoring and evaluations; and
- Internal and external stakeholder feedback.

District monitoring teams will primarily be comprised of district stewardship and tenures staff, but may also comprise other resource value specialists from the district, the region, or other agencies. Specialists will assist monitoring teams by providing expert advice, analysing resource value issues, and recommending appropriate actions to address monitoring results. Representatives from MWLAP may assist, or, in some cases, take the lead role in district-level monitoring where staffing resources are available.

Regions and districts may also lead or participate in more formal and intensive FREP evaluations that address regional priorities, with FREWG providing guidance and assistance, where required.

3.0 FSP Monitoring

The priority for district monitoring will be determining the effectiveness of high-risk results and strategies in FSPs and the assessment of local practices. This information will form the basis of dialogue with licensees at regional I-team meetings and with non-government professionals aimed at continuous improvement of forest management practices. Stewardship monitoring results will also help district managers make informed determinations on future FSP submissions, revise evidentiary requirements for future FSPs, and recommend modifications to results and strategies, or field practices, to meet FSP objectives.

Regional monitoring projects will help improve consistency in FSP evidentiary requirements within regions, better enable district managers to evaluate the levels of risk associated with results and strategies when making FSP determinations, and identify larger scale issues of regional or provincial scope.

Because of the uniqueness of each FSP, monitoring matrices should itemise results or strategies that differ from normal practice, involve higher levels of risk, or have been identified for monitoring by the district manager.

4.0 Compliance and Enforcement Staff Roles

Regional and district monitoring and provincial FREP effectiveness evaluations will not duplicate the efforts of the compliance and enforcement (C&E) program. The mandate of C&E is to ensure compliance with, and enforcement of, legislation. As a result, C&E staff will not participate in FREP. However, as part of normal operating practice, C&E staff input their inspection findings into compliance databases (e.g., CIMS), and therefore non-confidential data relevant to effectiveness evaluation priorities and projects may be requested for use under FREP. To help facilitate communication among staff, C&E management will be kept informed of effectiveness evaluation priorities and projects, and evaluation indicators and methodologies will be made available for their information.

5.0 Communications Strategy

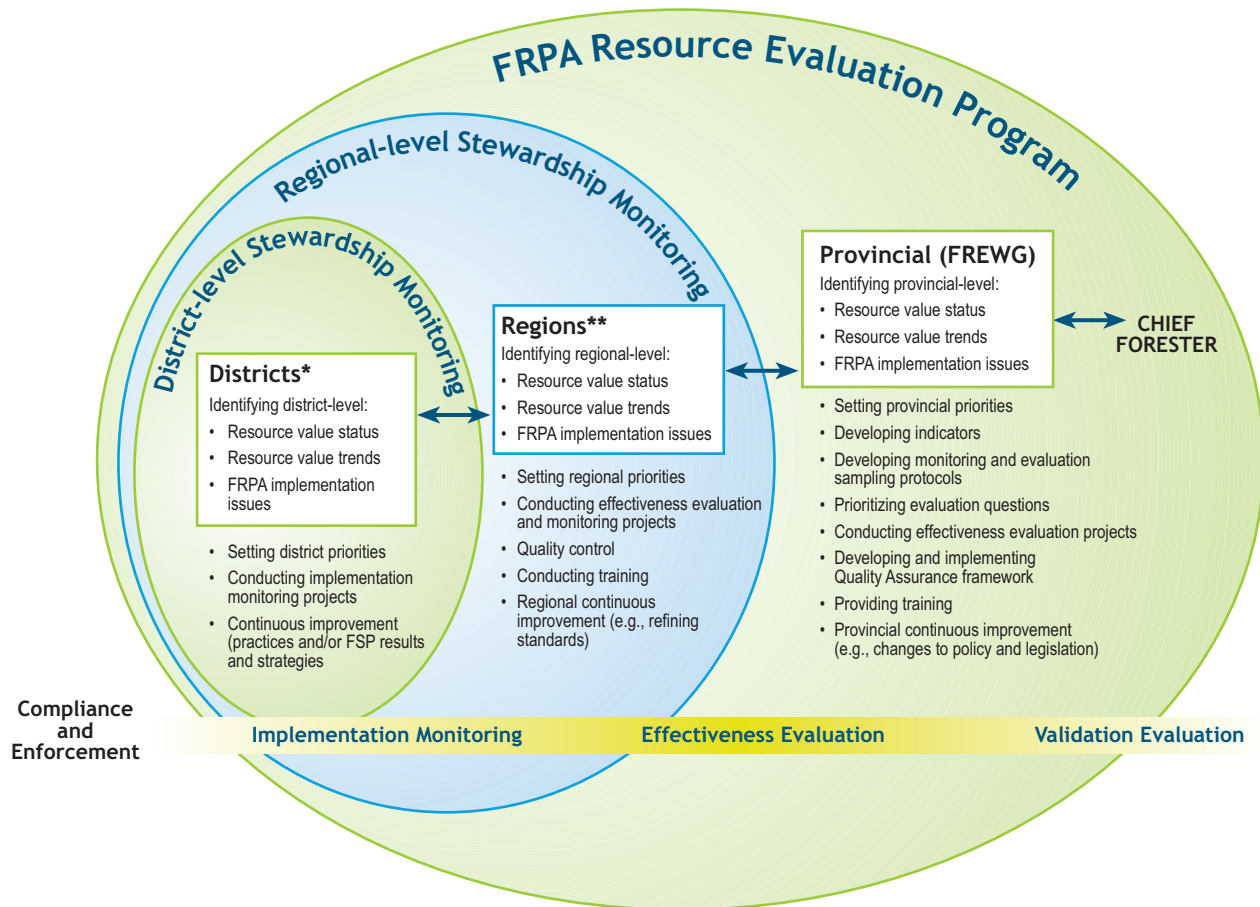
FREWG is currently developing a communications strategy. Communication principles for the evaluation program include:

- All indicators, methodologies and data will be peer reviewed and made available to the public;
- All evaluation reports will be objective and impartial; and
- Approved final reports will be made available to the public.

Regional and district monitoring reports, and FREP evaluation reports, should be distributed in a timely manner to district managers, other local agency representatives, licensees, the regional manager, the regional I-team, and FREWG. Monitoring reports should be distributed digitally for timely access and follow-up to monitoring results.

6.0 The Evaluation Cycle

Figure 1 shows the proposed relationship between the provincial FREP evaluation process and the district monitoring process. The diagram illustrates a potential integration of the district stewardship monitoring process into the FREP evaluation process. In the evaluation cycle, regional and district monitoring results will feed into the provincial FREP. Figure 2 is the FREP business map.



*district-level monitoring is co-ordinated in partnership with regional BA2 teams. Districts monitor practices carried out under FSPs; and flag FSPs any specific results or strategies they feel need to be monitored or evaluated at a more intensive level. District implementation monitoring will generally be routine/extensive in intensity.

**regional-level monitoring/evaluation is a co-ordinated partnership with FREWG. Regional and FREWG monitoring and effectiveness evaluations will include all levels of intensity.

FSP = Forest Stewardship Plan

BA2 Team = Regional Stewardship Business Area Team

FREWG = FRPA Resource Evaluation Working Group

Figure 1 FRPA Resource Effectiveness Evaluation and Stewardship Monitoring Program Integration

FRPA Resource Evaluation Program

Scientifically Valid Evaluations of Forest Practices under the Forest and Range Practices Act

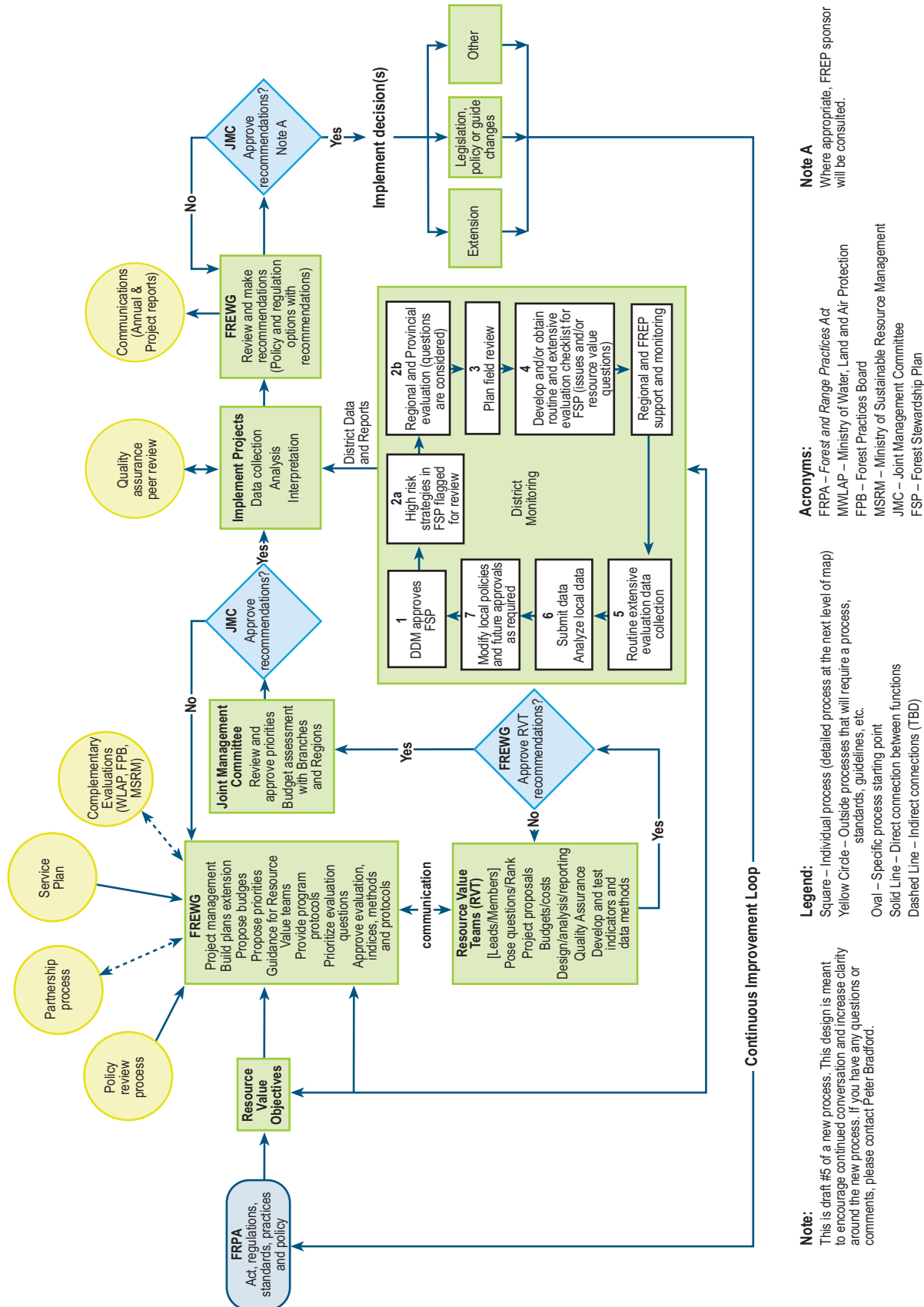


Figure 2 FREP Business Map

For More Information

For more information on the FRPA Resource Evaluation Program, please visit our web site at <http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfp/frep> or contact any member of the FRPA Resource Evaluation Working Group:

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