GUIDELINES
FOR A
DISTRICT PUBLIC AWARENESS PROGRAM

by

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and Lands, Victoria, British Columbia
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FOREWORD

As the District Manager in Powell River since 1979, Barry Mountain has been working to increase public awareness of forestry issues and forest management in his district. The purpose of this paper is to share, with other district managers, what he has learned from his efforts. The document is part of the Public Information Strategy on Forest Issues endorsed by the Ministry of Forests in February, 1986.

British Columbians, in general, are poorly informed about forest management. As district managers are in closer contact with the public than any other officers of the Ministry, their efforts to increase public awareness can do much to gain support for forest management practices in B.C.

Laura Stringer, Chairman
Forestry Issues Steering Committee
Ministry of Forests and Lands
Victoria, B.C.

November, 1986

INTRODUCTION

Increasing the public's awareness of forest management and the forest resource in B.C. requires a commitment from all staff in all levels of the Ministry of Forests and Lands. This paper outlines some of the thoughts, ideas and activities that my staff and I found useful in working with the people of the Powell River Forest District. It covers three main areas:

- steps towards achieving public awareness.
- principles of sound public relations.
- helpful references.

The appendices contain samples of material developed for a presentation to update the public on forestry activities in our district:

- an invitation to attend "Forest Update '86."
- a newspaper ad about the presentation.
- a questionnaire form for public evaluation of the presentation.
- a script for a slide show on district activities.

Although each district deals with a different public and varying levels of awareness, you may be able to adapt some of the ideas presented here for your use. I would be happy to discuss any of them with you.

Finally, I look forward to your feedback - to helping you and to learning from you. We will all benefit from sharing our ideas on increasing public awareness. And if the end result is a more informed public, forest management, in general, will benefit.

STEPS TOWARDS AN EFFECTIVE PUBLIC AWARENESS PROGRAM

Any effective public awareness program begins in the office. It is important to have staff who can communicate confidently with the public and the media on many aspects of forest management. It is also necessary to have comprehensive information packages that are readily available to the public.

Outside the office, district staff need to develop a wide network of contacts in the community, the media and many organizations that are interested in forest management. Although public awareness efforts should be encouraged 52 weeks each year, staff can also try to reach the public through special events, such as National Forest Week.

Here is an outline of some of the steps districts can take towards creating a strong public awareness program:

1. **Encourage staff training in:**

   (a) public speaking through:

   - Toastmaster International Clubs

   Membership includes a subscription to a monthly magazine, The Toastmaster. Contact the club in your area or write to:

   Toastmaster International
   P.O. Box 10400
   Santa Ana, CA
   U.S.A. 92711

   - courses.

   Most night schools and community colleges offer courses in public speaking.

   - books.

   Your local library likely has a good selection of books on the subject.

   (b) media relations through:

   - workshops.

   McPherson, Mackey and Company offer a good two-day session on media training and handling TV interviews.
   Contact them at:

   P.O. Box 656, Station A
   Vancouver, B.C.
   V6C 2N5.

- courses

Contact your personnel officer for a list of available courses.

(c) issues management through:

- courses

Check with your personnel officer for a course or people who could provide one. Issues management training is necessary for district managers and others who are faced with handling high profile issues such as herbicide use.

2. **Make information on forestry matters available in district offices through:**

(a) an assortment of take-home booklets and brochures displayed in the reception area.

(b) binders of detailed information that the public can read in the reception area.

(c) publications of all kinds, including the above, plus audio-visuals that are available in the district library.

NOTE: In all cases, the resource officer should work closely with the district clerk to ensure that the material is updated and that there is a sufficient supply.

3. **Develop and maintain community contacts by:**

(a) holding open houses and "updating sessions" about forestry projects that have been completed and about plans for the coming year.

- Appoint a coordinator three to four months ahead.
- Meet with key staff to establish the goals of the event.
- Invite the forest industry to participate.
- Run the event through the evening.
- Consider the use of:

  - shopping mall displays to advertise the event and to supplement it.
  - slide show/videos. (See APPENDIX IV)
  - short talks.
  - statistical supplements/annual reports to hand out.
  - critique forms or short questionnaires to gain input/suggestions from the public. (See APPENDIX III).

- Advertise the event in the local newspapers, on radio and on community TV. (See APPENDIX II).

- Invite key community people, such as the mayor and council, the regional district representative, the MP, the MLA, Chamber of Commerce representatives and industry representatives. (See APPENDIX I).

- Send the media a summary of the information that will be available at the event.

(b) encouraging district staff to practise good citizenship and become involved in the community through organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, the Board of Trade and service clubs.

(c) keeping representatives of municipal, regional, provincial and federal governments informed of forestry activities.

- Consider meeting informally once a year. This will also provide an opportunity to resolve minor issues before they develop into larger ones.

4. **Develop and maintain local media contacts by:**

(a) meeting informally before a forestry issue hits the front page.

(b) adopting an open and honest approach.

(c) cooperating fully by providing any information that is public.

(d) remaining cool when a story goes against your views.

(e) pointing out inaccuracies and remaining non-defensive.

(f) being positive and pro-active.

(g) inviting the media along with other key community leaders to a half-day field tour of two or three interesting activities within your district.

- Tips for working with newspapers:

- Meet with all local editors.
- Treat all newspapers in your district equally.
- Find out when their deadlines are and respect them.
- Never say, "This is off the record."
- Do not ask to review copy before it is printed.

- Tips for working with radio and community TV:

  - Meet with the local program manager.
  - Consider a series of half-hour programs every month for six months or so.

  - Involve the forest industry, the Junior Forest Wardens, the Canadian Institute of Forestry, British Columbia Forestry Association and other organizations in the programs.

  - Consider a series of phone-in talk-line radio shows on topics such as:

    - Why Do We Burn Slash?
    - Are Pesticides Really Necessary?
    - What is the State of Our Local Forest?
    - Forest Recreation - What's New?

  - Consider a series of TV shows on topics such as:

    - Pesticides in Forest Management - a panel discussion of three or four persons
    - NSR - The True Story In This Area
    - Silviculture in Your Community
    - High Tech in the Forests - a Look at the Latest Developments
    - Meet Your Junior Forest Wardens
    - An Interview with Bill Young, etc.

5. **Develop and maintain contact with organizations interested in forestry by:**

   (a) becoming actively involved.
   (b) communicating regularly.

   - Some Key Organizations:

     - B.C. Forestry Association - a broadly based, non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the wise use and management of our forests. Its directors represent all branches of society - government, industry, business, education and professional groups, for example.

     - Junior Forest Wardens of B.C. - a program for youths aged 6 to 16. It focuses on learning about the forest resource through courses, hikes, camps and field trips.

     - Canadian Institute of Forestry - a national organization of 2600 members with a professional interest in forestry. There are eight sections in B.C. The Forestry Chronicle is the official journal of the CIF.

     - professional associations such as the Association of B.C. Professional Foresters and the Applied Science Technologists and Technicians of B.C.

- other forestry organizations such as:

    - Integrated Vegetation Management Association of B.C.
    - Professional Pest Management Association
    - Council of Forest Industries of British Columbia
    - Canadian Forestry Service
    - International Woodworkers Association
    - Faculty of Forestry at UBC, Pest Management at Simon Fraser and others
    - Forest Research Council of B.C.

- public interest groups involved with managing natural resources such as the Outdoor Recreation Council and the B.C. Wildlife Federation.

NOTE: The Public Affairs Branch of the Ministry of Forests and Lands maintains a list of groups, organizations and associations interested in forest management in B.C.

6. **Hold special events, such as a program for National Forest Week by:**

    (a) appointing a coordinator five or six months ahead of National Forest Week, the first week in May.

    (b) involving a broad spectrum of forest organizations.

    (c) holding on-site demonstrations of forest activities.

PRINCIPLES OF SOUND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public support - or at least, public tolerance - of forest management practices allows managers to proceed in the best interests of the public and the resource. This is the goal of any public awareness campaign on forestry topics. It is also the goal of public relations activities. Here are seven principles from the field of public relations (Fazio and Gilbert 1981) that we can apply to our forest management efforts.

1. Every action makes an impression.

Every individual or group dealing with the public makes an impression - good, bad or indifferent. Everything we do or say affects how others perceive us. Therefore, we need to be as concerned with the words and manners used in answering the telephone as we are with the way we conduct a field trip or a public meeting.

The way the public responds to herbicide use or any other issue is strongly influenced by the reputation you have built up over the years with:

- your own employees (most important of all).
- the local community.
- the local government.
- the media.
- recreationists.
- special interest groups.

This principle has also been expressed this way: "What you are doing speaks so loudly I cannot hear what you are saying."

2. Good public relations is a prerequisite of success.

Abraham Lincoln recognized this when he said, "Public sentiment is everything. With sentiment, nothing can fail; without it, nothing can succeed." There is a long list of projects and resource management practices that either were never started or were scrapped due to lack of public support. An article in the Journal of Forestry[1] puts it this way:

"Any forestry policy that runs counter to pro-environment opinion risks becoming a public problem, damaging the profession's credibility and reducing the latitude accorded forestry by the public. We foresters need to demonstrate, to the public, that forestry is consistent with public sentiment for environmental protection."

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[1]Hendee, John C. June 1984. Public opinion and what foresters should do about it. Journal of Forestry, pp. 340-344.

3. The pubic is actually many publics.

The first step in establishing good public relations is to identify the public. Trying to practise public relations without identifying the public is like shooting at a blank piece of cardboard, then drawing target rings around the hole.

You can categorize publics by what they do, such as government agencies, forest companies, environmental groups or business people. You can categorize them by where they live, such as local residents or city-dwellers.

Publics can also be grouped into internal and external publics. The internal public is identified with your organization in some way. Examples would be employees, customers or suppliers. They are usually most receptive to your message and they can be very helpful in influencing their relatives, friends and neighbours. For public relations to be positive and effective, deal with your internal public first.

4. Truth and honesty are essential.

No matter how powerful, how well financed or how well organized, no effort to influence public opinion can succeed on a foundation of dishonesty. Examples of this principle abound at all levels but perhaps the most famous was the fall of Richard Nixon. Nixon did not fall because of the break-in at Watergate but because he lied about it.

5. Offence is more effective than defence.

Many forest managers believe that when things go wrong, the best tactic is silence. Time after time, when misfortune focuses unfavourable publicity on an organization, the order goes out from top management: "Don't talk to the press," or "Lay low until things cool off." With journalists inspired by the success of the Watergate reporters, taking such a position is like waving a red flag.

The better action is usually as simple as a Sunday school lesson - prompt, honest, accurate information, including full cooperation with the media.

6. Communication is the key to good public relations.

When things go wrong, the accusing finger almost invariably points to a communications gap. Poor employee performance, low morale, aircraft tragedies, divorces - even wars are often attributed to a breakdown or lack in communication. On the other hand, skillful communication greatly increases the chances of influencing others and establishing good relations.

Communication is simply the successful transmission of messages without distortion. But true communication is synonymous with understanding. Without this, there is little hope of influencing others or reaching agreement on disputes.

7. Planning is essential.

Instead of always trying to "put out fires," a long-term public relations plan concentrates on prevention. It keeps an organization on the offensive.

Emergencies, such as the escape of a prescribed fire, can be anticipated to a degree and dealt with through pre-planning. This is no different from the pre-planning that occurs well in advance of suppression action on fires or the mobilization of personnel and equipment for rescue operations.

CONCLUSION

Increasing public awareness of forestry and forest management is an ongoing, year-around job. As district managers, we may sometimes feel that we don't always have time for it. However, the time we spend in keeping the public informed will save us time in the long run by gaining acceptance for forest management practices. The dividends are well worth the effort.

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APPENDIX I. SAMPLE INVITATION TO AN UPDATING SESSION

Ministry of Forests
7077 Duncan Street
Powell River, B.C.
V8Z 1W1

February 3, 1986

File: 190

Dear:

You are cordially invited to attend the District Manager's "Forest Update '86,"

on THURSDAY, MARCH 6, 1986
at 7:30 p.m.

The Inn at Westview
7050 Alberni Street
Powell River, B.C.

The presentation will highlight activities in the Powell River Forest District during the past year, and what is planned for 1986.

The specific areas that will be addressed are: inventory and planning; engineering; timber harvesting; scaling; protection (fire management and pest management); silviculture; recreation.

Displays and brochures will be provided, as will opportunities for questions and discussion.

Yours truly,

Barry Mountain
District Manager
Powell River District

Appendix II SAMPLE NEWSPAPER AD FOR UPDATING SESSION

FOREST UPDATE '86

The Public is invited to attend the District Manager's "Forest Update '86",

on THURSDAY, MARCH 6, 1986 at 7:30 p.m.

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The specific areas that will be addressed are: inventory and planning; engineering; timber harvesting; scaling; protection (fire management and pest management); silviculture and recreation.

Displays and brochures will be provided, as will opportunities for questions and discussion.

You are also invited to visit the information display in the Town Centre Mall during the week of March 3 to 6th. The area will be staffed from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. daily to provide opportunities for questions and discussion.

Province of British Columbia

Ministry of Forests

APPENDIX III SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EVALUATION OF UPDATING SESSION

CRITIQUE FOR FOREST UPDATE 1986

Please respond by underlining the answer of your choice, and leave this page with us. Your input will help us with future presentations.

1.	Presentation was:	GOOD	FAIR	POOR ?
2.	Presentation was:	ABOUT RIGHT	TOO SHORT	TOO LONG ?
3.	Update should be held:	MORNING	AFTERNOON	EVENING ?
4.	Update should be held:	ONCE A YEAR	TWICE A YEAR	EVERY 2ND YEAR ?
5.	Handouts were:	GOOD	FAIR	POOR ?
6.	Visual presentations were:	GOOD	FAIR	POOR ?

7. What additional topics would you like to get information about?

a)_____

b)_____

c)_____

d)_____

8. Additional comments: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your interest and input into forest management.

APPENDIX IV SAMPLE SLIDE SHOW SCRIPT ON DISTRICT ACTIVITIES

"FOREST UPDATE '86"

SECOND ANNUAL REPORT TO THE PUBLIC ON THE
POWELL RIVER FOREST DISTRICT

A SLIDE PRESENTATION BY BARRY MOUNTAIN, DISTRICT MANAGER,
MINISTRY OF FORESTS, POWELL RIVER AT PUBLIC MEETING HELD
AT POWELL RIVER ON MARCH 6, 1986

FOREST UPDATE '86

1. Welcome to "Forest Update '86
   This is our second annual report to the public on the Powell River Forest District and your forests.

2. A modest recovery in British Columbia forest industries appears to be underway. This is good news for the Powell River area where the forest industry employs over one in three of the labour force.

3. The forest industry is the engine that powers the B.C. economy, accounting for about 50% of the manufacturing shipments of the Province.

4. The forest sector normally provides over five billion dollars annually to B.C.'s total export revenue.

5. Let us look at the Powell River Forest District and some of the forest activity highlights.

6. The District is one of 11 forest districts within the Vancouver Region.

7. The district stretches from Saltery Bay to Mount Waddington and includes Powell Lake, Toba Inlet, Bute Inlet, Texada Island and the Northern Gulf Islands such as Cortes, Read, Redonda, Maurelle and Stuart.

8. Staffing consists of 39 field foresters, technicians and administrative staff.

9. Electronic word processing and data processing facilities continue to be expanded in our district office. This has resulted in a significant productivity increase with the same staff level.

10. Some highlights in the field are: the volume of timber harvested from all tenures in 1985 within the Powell River District increased 32% from the previous year. The total cut was 673,000 m^3.

11. The total cut represents 1/3 of what the Powell River Mill complex consumes annually.

12. A Woodlot Licence in the Hammil Hill - Deighton Creek areas will be awarded soon. The Licence covers 256 hectares of Crown Lands and an additional area of private land.

13. The first horse logging operation in our district to occur in many decades is now being conducted on the east side of Okeover Inlet off the new Theodosia Forest Road.

14. The scaling or measuring of cut timber is being increasingly conducted by private sector scalers with close monitoring by Forest Service Check Scalers.

15. High tech has now reached scalers with the introduction of portable hand held commputer terminals for entry of log data in the field. Once it is brought back to the office, it is simply plugged into the office computer and the data is transferred automatically.

16. The Inventory section priority is the continual updating of over 100 forest maps and associated data files.

17. The Inventory Resource Officer is closely involved with the introduction of the Geo Map Micro Computer system of mapping. In addition satellite imagery transfer to maps will soon be operational in our district.

18. The Theodosia Forest Road, an extension of the Southview Road, has provided access for a large area of second growth timber for the Small Business Enterprise Program. Almost 9 km of road has been built since 1983.

19. The Powell Forest Canoe route continues to receive international interest with letters coming from such places as California and Germany.

20. A major challenge was faced by the forest industry and the B.C. Forest Service during this past forest fire season.

21. The number of forest fires in B.C. averages about 2,300 each year. These fires burn an average of 74 000 hectares of forest land each year.

22. The 1985 season resulted in over 3,600 fires over 242 000 hectares of forest land throughout B.C.

23. All members of our staff were mobilized to assist in the all out war against fires within this district and throughout B.C. About 1/3 of our staff assisted in major fires in the Boston Bar, Pemberton and Invermere areas.

24. Powell River's major fire was the "Orf" fire located at Orford River in Bute Inlet. Over 650 hectares of forest land burned at a cost of over 1/3 million dollars.

25. Slash burns were conducted successfully on Texada Island and offered the residents of Powell River dramatic sunsets on occasion.

26. The major Pest Management activity continues to be the control of Phellinus weirii, and laminated root rot disease, by planting of disease resistant species and machine stumping of infection centers.

27. The recently signed Canada-British Columbia Forest Resources Development Agreement will result in $300 million dollars being spent over five years on Backlog Reforestation and Intensive Forest Management.

28. This agreement along with the traditional Ministry of Forests funding will result in a considerable increase in silviculture activities in our district over the next four years. These goals are:

29. - Juvenile Spacing

30. - Fertilizing

31. - and other forest Stand Tending activities will be a real challenge for the Ministry of Forests and industry foresters and technicians. Additional employment in the private sector will occur during this period.

31. I am confident that your forests in the Powell River Forest District can continue to supply many benefits in the form of raw materials for our mills, employment for our workers, forest recreation, water, fish and wildlife for the enjoyment and use by the public.

32. THE END

APPENDIX V SAMPLE OF RESPONSE TO "FOREST UPDATE '85," THE FIRST REPORT TO THE CITIZENS OF POWELL RIVER (FROM THE "POWELL RIVER NEWS")

Forest Update a worthy effort

To the editor:

For those who attended the Ministry of Forests "Update 85" on Feb. 21, the following may be consistent with their impressions.

Forestry as seen from the ministry point of view was presented in digestible packages by ministry specialists during two approximately three-hour sessions. These presentations had substance, scope and information for those who attended.

The district manager and staff of the Powell River Forest District gave a good accounting of themselves. For those of us whose industrial interests often come under the scrutiny of some aspect of district responsibility, the presentations were an opportunity to hear in depth how the ministry arrives at decisions and how it applies policy.

There must be more of this kind of information-sharing in the future for a better understanding of how we all fit into the very large forest picture.

We wish to give credit where credit is due for a job well done.

Andy Byrne,
Granite Lake Logging,
on behalf of
Upper Sunshine Coast
Lumbermen's Group