

Future Forest Ecosystems of B.C.
Exploring the Opportunities
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UNBC

Doug Konkin, Deputy Minister of Forests and Range
“Overview of the Current Management Paradigm –
Structure and Function”

Check against delivery

- Thanks for the introduction and invitation to speak.
- I understand you had some provocative presentations yesterday that I can't hope to compete with. But what I can do is ask you to help us plan the future.
- Just three months ago I was here in Prince George speaking on “Responding to the Future - Policy Implications.” At that time I quoted Yogi Berra, “Predictions are hard, especially about the future.”
- The same quote applies today.
- Your task this morning is one of the hardest things possible. To open your minds and truly listen to one another. To consider the enormously complex, value-laden field of resource management, not as it is now, but as it may be 20, 50 or 100 years into the future.
- I'm not sure what Jim has told you, but the origins of this conference are fairly simple. We're worried.

- Coming from a Deputy Minister of Forests that's a significant admission. The Deputy Minister's office is amazing, chaotic and sometimes just plain scary. No two days are the same; I live in an industry whose death is always rumoured to be around the corner and in my two years on the job the learning has never stopped. I love it and have come to truly appreciate that nothing is certain, anything is possible and everything depends on everything else.
- In other words it takes a lot to worry me.
- So what is my worry?
- That we're missing something, that our long term vision of forestry is based on inaccurate assumptions, and that some point in the future people are going to look back, like we do with smoking or asbestos, and say "they could see things were changing – why did they wait so long to take action."
- I hate worrying. Mark Twain put it best when he said, "worry is interest paid in advance on trouble that never happens". Fortunately for me, my staff hates me worrying more than I do.
- When Jim came on as the Chief Forester we decided to do something and that something starts with you.
- We knew the best way to deal with complex uncertainties was to engage in a public dialogue on the information, the uncertainties in the information and the possibilities for action.
- I know that yesterday Bruce Larson, Fred Swanson and Robert Kozak talked a bit about forest management paradigms.

- If you Google “new forest management paradigm” you get 122,000 hits; and when you ask your communications staff to write a speech on current management paradigms, they run in fear.
- Most of you know our paradigms, but I’ll talk about it briefly.
- Like everything else in life it is changing and evolving but there is no sense in denying that we still have a forest management system built predominantly around timber values.
- We still have land designations that in a large part are based on a belief that we can isolate the landscape into protected and integrated management areas.
- Our harvest management decisions are made at the broad management unit level, forest treatments are determined at the cut-block level and we have a harvest policy based on orderly conversion of old growth to second growth.
- At the same time we’re setting aside some areas for protection, we’re working on sustained yield basis in the other areas.
- Quite significantly we’ve been managing our forests to protect them from wildfire in an era without climate change.
- I am going to stop here and ask how many of you believe Global Warming is occurring?
- I acknowledge that I am an agnostic when it comes to global warming and long-term climate change. I have read a lot of arguments on both sides and just finished Michael Crichton’s latest best-seller “State of Fear” where he claims climate change is junk science and makes some interesting observations of inherent bias in science.

- But whether or not I believe I can't ignore the possibility. Whether climate change is a result of man-made activities or part of a sum of the natural cycles you discussed yesterday, the one inescapable fact is that our climate is changing, and it's changing now.
- I'm left with the question, is our current forest management paradigm responsive enough to the rapidly changing world we find ourselves in?
- And what is the risk associated with changing our current management paradigm? Or, not changing it?
- This forum is being held in the Interior, but climate change is affecting all our forests. It just hasn't been as visible on the Coast.
- Is climate change important?
- Well, of course it is. Forestry is a key economic driver accounting for 15 per cent of the province's GDP, and directly and indirectly employs more than 200,000 people.
- As importantly, we have an incredible biological legacy that confers a significant responsibility on us to look to the future. Granted the future will look different, but I believe we still will have a forest industry in British Columbia.
- I'm not asking you for a grand vision for the future, but I am looking for ideas, suggestions for incremental change that will better position us to respond to the future.

- We need ideas on our tenure system; is it responsive enough? We've seen consolidation and, at the same time, we're creating many, smaller tenures. Can these many smaller tenure holders, many of them new players to the forest industry, respond to changing conditions?
- Tenures staff would argue yes, since it's the forest management practices and tools that need to be responsive to change.
- Others argue that we need a new management model. Just last month Merv Wilkinson was honoured with an honorary doctorate for his contributions to forestry through the management of his woodlot at Wildwood. Is this the model for the future? Or is it industrial forestry? Or is there room for both?
- We're here today to hear all points of view. Before coming here today, I asked some of my staff what they would do if they were Minister for a day. What have they learned from our experience with mountain pine beetle, with wildfire? What is our research telling us?
- Brian Simpson, who is here today, told me about the contribution suppression has made to the mountain pine beetle infestation.
- He told me about the build up of forest fuels – a contributing factor to the extreme fires of 2003 and 2004.
- He and other Protection staff are looking for ways to re-integrate prescribed fire as a forest management tool to increase awareness about the forest fuels risks of extreme fires. They are also looking at the advantage more deciduous species might provide in breaking up the landscape and size of these fires.

- Two other things I've heard loud and clear from Protection is the need for fire management objectives in land use planning and the need for patience, that there's no quick fix to fuel conditions.
- Dale Draper, Director of Tree Improvement, is looking at breeding trees for the future. He's asking what characteristics we're looking for? His staff says we need to quantify the relative adaptability of the genotypes in our orchards, look at how we might expand our understanding of how different species respond to progressive and extreme climate change events.
- He knows genetic gain and seedlot quality remain important, but wants more emphasis to be placed on stability of genotypes over a very wide range of conditions. Some initial research is under way, but more is required.
- In terms of MPB and fires, both Dale and I believe seed use efficiencies can help mitigate supply and demand issues but only if we have a means of immediately enhancing seed production.
- We also need to consider selective breeding programs. There is evidence, for example, of Lodgepole pine resistance to MPB. Given the extent of infestation, that isn't much help now, but it could be helpful in the future.
- For his last point, Dale reminded me that Research staff recently issued a species management composition report for discussion and feedback – he's hoping to hear your input on that.
- Marvin Eng, our beetle impact guru, also had some advice. He says I should plan for 80 per cent of susceptible pine in the Interior being dead by 2013.

- Like me, he looks back and can't believe we relied so heavily on a large volume of over-mature trees for future timber supply, particularly an early seral species like lodgepole pine. Clearly there is a risk in basing the long-term timber supply on a resource subject to periodic catastrophes. Looking forward, timber supply analysis needs to explicitly incorporate natural disturbances.
- Marvin also reminded me that forest health practitioners need to know when to expect defeat and when and where to give up the fight to control insect epidemics. He believes us warm and fuzzy foresters continue cut and burn and other control strategies well past the point of effectiveness. He clearly doesn't know the political cost of doing nothing.
- Marvin also talked about salvage harvesting. He asks, "At what level do we plan?" One suggestion is to plan at a provincial scale, where, when and if to modify the AAC in any given management unit to accommodate salvage harvesting. And plan at a management unit scale where we will retain un-harvested areas to protect non-timber values.
- Another recommendation he had is to amend the *Forest and Range Practices Act* to require increased retention in large-scale salvage blocks. The Chief Forester will be issuing guidance about retention at the landscape and stand level in large-scale salvage blocks within the next two weeks.
- His last idea is to implement area-based AACs as quickly as possible.
- The last set of comments are mine. They're about Learning and Knowledge Management.

- I don't know whether the rate of scientific change is qualitatively different from the past but it sure feels like it. The availability of data, the speed of communication and the global nature of our economy call for a broader skill bases, more systems thinking and a breakdown of inter disciplinary barriers.
- Researchers and practitioners need to find more effective ways to work together; to communicate and share knowledge faster. Scientists are looking for peer reviewed publications in scientific journals and practitioners are looking for best advice.
- We need to meet somewhere in the middle. We also need incremental strategies based on examination of potential benefits and costs, of action and inaction. In other words, we need structured adaptive management.
- These are some ideas for change. What are yours? You are the experts in your fields. We want to hear what you have to say and looking forward to learning the recommendations from the working groups.
- “Paradigm” comes from the Greek, paradeigma, meaning to “show side by side”. I think as we prepare and plan for the future we need to do that side by side. Together. Collaboratively. We want, no, we need your ideas.
- Thank you.