Forests for Tomorrow
2007/ 2008 Public and Stakeholder
INFORMATION SHARING AND NOTIFICATION GUIDELINES

1. PURPOSE

This document outlines options for delivery agents to use in information sharing and notification with the public and other stakeholders depending on the locations, issues, and activities involved. This document also sets out to clarify the roles and responsibilities for information sharing and notification of the public and other stakeholders among the FFT delivery agents, FFT staff, District Manager, and the administrator. These guidelines are not intended for First Nations Information Sharing and Consultation, which is covered in a separate guidance document[1].

The target audience is Ministry of Forests and Range Branch and Regional Staff, Districts, and the Recipient Agreement Holders (delivery agents) involved in the Forests for Tomorrow program.

2. DEFINITIONS

"PINES" refers to the Program Investment Entry System. This system records and tracks investment made under provincial forestry investment programs and will be administered by MFR Branch staff.

"Forests for Tomorrow" is a provincial silviculture program directed at the reforestation and restoration of areas catastrophically damaged by the mountain pine bark beetle and/or wildfires.

"Delivery agent" means a party designated by the MOFR to receive funding for delivering activities under the Forests for Tomorrow program. This definition may include agreements with recipient agreement holders, silviculture contractors, licensees, or districts.

"The public" means a person, a group of people or a community representative(s) residing in the affected areas of British Columbia who have a stake in the activities of FFT.

"Stakeholders and user groups" means the organizations, agencies and groups having an interest in the program activities. This includes licensees, range holders, trapper and guide outfitters, community watershed associations, recreation groups etc.

3. PROGRAM DELIVERY

Forests for Tomorrow (FFT) was established to address the provincial government's concern with the growing area of Not Satisfactorily Restocked Crown forest land and the effects on future timber supply. The program was designed to improve the future timber supply through silviculture

1 *First Nations information sharing is not addressed in this document. First Nations Information Sharing and Consultation Guidelines are on the FFT website at: http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/ftp/hfp/external/!publish/FIA%20Documents/Standards/FFT_FN_Info_Sharing_Consultation.pdf*

treatments, initially focusing on areas affected by recent large wildfires and the mountain pine beetle epidemic. FFT activities will also reduce risks to biodiversity, water, fish, wildlife, and habitat.

FFT involves strategic planning and project delivery for re-establishing forests on unharvested areas that lie outside industry obligations. The program implements a process from the development of Management Unit (MU) Silviculture Strategies to site level silviculture activities.

FFT has completed Type I Silviculture Strategies on most impacted TSAs and Type II Silviculture Strategies on several impacted MU's, which will subsequently direct funding to selected treatments on the land base. A Type I silviculture strategy compiles existing information and the knowledge of local forestry and environmental professionals to identify issues related to timber supply, timber quality, and habitat supply in the TSA, and then engages stakeholders in a workshop setting to identify silviculture strategies that can be used to address the issues. These potential strategies will need to be quantified and/or refined in a more in-depth Type II analysis. The results of a Type II analysis better guide on the ground implementation. The Silviculture Strategies include objectives previously set in Higher Level Land Use Plans (LUP). In this way the Program recognizes and adheres to the priorities, concerns and objectives that were recorded though stakeholder consultation in developing these Land Use Plans.

Aside from surveys and planning, the majority of projects undertaken by delivery agents involve activities on the land base, such as; site preparation, danger tree falling, planting, brushing, fertilization, and ecological restoration projects. These stand treatments will impact the land base and a significant portion of the work will be done on unmanaged forests. Impacts of various treatments on the landscape may be positive or negative and are strongly influenced by time. Although rare, potential short-term impacts may include temporary disturbances to environmental and social values in impacted watersheds. FFT activities strive to minimize these impacts and to achieve positive longer-term impacts such as species selection that ensures resilience and viability of future stands and ecosystem recovery.

FFT recognizes that communities and other stakeholders need to be kept informed about the reforestation and restoration activities FFT is doing to help mitigate the long-term timber supply and restore other forest values. FFT is committed to transparent communication of its plans and prescriptions with any interested stakeholder or community.

This document provides a description of options that a delivery agent might use in information sharing and notification depending on the locations, issues, and activities involved. A process is recommended for FFT staff, district staff and delivery agents to ensure that information on FFT plans and prescriptions are available to the public and other interested stakeholders and user groups. An overview of the roles and responsibilities is also provided.

4. INFORMATION SHARING AND NOTIFICATION

Openness and accountability in FFT Program delivery is achieved in part through effective information sharing with the public and other stakeholders. Effective information sharing allows British Columbians to find out what is happening in their forests, express their views and have them seriously considered by decision makers. An effective information sharing and notification process that includes a mechanism for feedback will help FFT demonstrate to the Province that they have considered the public interest in maintaining diversity of ecological, economic and social values related to forests. See Appendix A for a flow diagram depicting the Information Sharing and Notification Process.

4.1 FFT delivery agents are responsible for notifying the public and key stakeholders about planned FFT ground- based activities[2] in one or more of the following scenarios:

- The planned activity will be visible to a community
- The planned activity could potentially affect other resource users and stakeholders
- The planned activity is in a community watershed
- The planned activity may affect a community in some way (temporarily reduce access etc.)

4.2 FFT delivery agents are responsible for contacting the District and FFT staff to inform them of the start of information sharing and notification and to request assistance identifying the key stakeholders and user groups and the preferred method for communication. In rare cases where public or stakeholder concerns are anticipated to be high and could attract media attention, FFT staff will advise Public Affairs Bureau of the situation.

4.3 FFT delivery agents will determine appropriate timing for information sharing and notification. It must start early enough to allow activities to occur on schedule. At the time of preparing for surveys, when large candidate areas are identified through the broad overview to collate selective area information, the delivery agent should begin strategic-level notification. At the time of prescription, further notification may be sent to specific stakeholders and user groups in the areas.

4.4 FFT delivery agents will select the best method of information sharing and notification. More than one method may be needed to reach multiple stakeholders and the public. Possible tools for information sharing and notification are:

- Post ad/ notice in local newspapers
- Post article or news release in local newspapers
- Post notification in libraries, post offices and local community centres
- Send a letter to potentially affected user groups and key stakeholders
- Hold public meetings

2 Surveys are not included because they are considered 'no-impact'. Silviculture Strategies are not included because they are covered by the FIA Silviculture Strategy Standards (http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hcp/fia/landbase/silviculture.htm).

4.5 Public notification should include all of the following information:
- Brief description of FFT Program with link to website[3]
- Name, contact information and role of delivery agent as primary contact for inquiries
- Nature and extent of the proposed activities
- Location of activities (map may be useful)
- Some indication of the potential impacts of the activity
- Planned start and completion dates

4.6 FFT delivery agents will keep all documentation of their information sharing and notification efforts and transactions with the public and stakeholders.

5. OPPORTUNITY FOR REVIEW AND COMMENT

The public and stakeholders should be given a reasonable length of time to review the information in the notification and contact the delivery agent with comments and questions. These comments and questions must be well documented by the delivery agent and recorded in PINES.

5.1 If a delivery agent receives a question, request for more information or concern that may be resolved by further communication the delivery agent will:
- Respond promptly to the inquiry
- Maintain a record of the communications

5.2 If a delivery agent receives a request to change their prescription or planned activity because of specific concerns the delivery agent will:
- Discuss the issue with the FFT Regional Staff and keep them informed
- Document all efforts to achieve a resolution and accommodate the concern
- Update PINES

5.3 If the delivery agent cannot resolve significant concerns raised by the public within a reasonable timeframe, the District Manager will advise FFT staff on how to proceed.

5.3.1 Once the issue has been resolved, the concerned stakeholder will be notified by FFT staff
- The delivery agent updates PINES

5.3.2 If the substantial concern cannot be resolved the project may be cancelled or put on hold. The stakeholder will be notified. The PINES update indicates that the requirement wasn't met and that the project is on hold.

3 *http://forestsfortomorrow.ca/index.html*

6. PUBLIC MEETINGS

In circumstances where a notification results in a significant level of interest, further consultation methods may be selected as a preferred approach to ensuring that concerns are accommodated. This may include a public meeting. A delivery agent may also choose a public meeting as the most appropriate method for information sharing with multiple interested stakeholders and user groups in an area on the advice of the District.

6.1 Delivery agents who organize a public meeting should:

- Notify FFT and district staff
- Ensure that times and locations are convenient for the public
- Provide a spokesperson(s) to explain the plans and the linkages between them
- Ensure that a Regional FFT staff person will attend
- Ensure clarity in displays and other forms of presentation
- Encourage both written feedback in the form of questionnaires, and verbal feedback by way of question periods and/or informal discussion.
- Ensure that an adequate follow-up to the meeting is provided to the public

7. SUMMARY OF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Delivery agent is responsible for:

- Contacting the District and FFT staff to get assistance identifying the key stakeholders and user groups
- Selecting an appropriate method for Information Sharing and Notification
- Ensuring that all information contained in the notification is correct and complete
- Ensuring that the notification is posted as early as possible and for an adequate length of time to allow for comments
- Responding promptly to questions or concerns submitted from the public and other interested stakeholders
- Initiating FFT regional staff involvement and Regional Executive Director consultation in a situation of impasse.
- Keeping detailed records of all information sharing and communications
- Updating PINES when notification is complete

FFT Regional Staff are responsible for:

- Assisting the Delivery agent to successfully resolve concerns raised by the public or other stakeholders and in consultation with the Regional Executive Director.

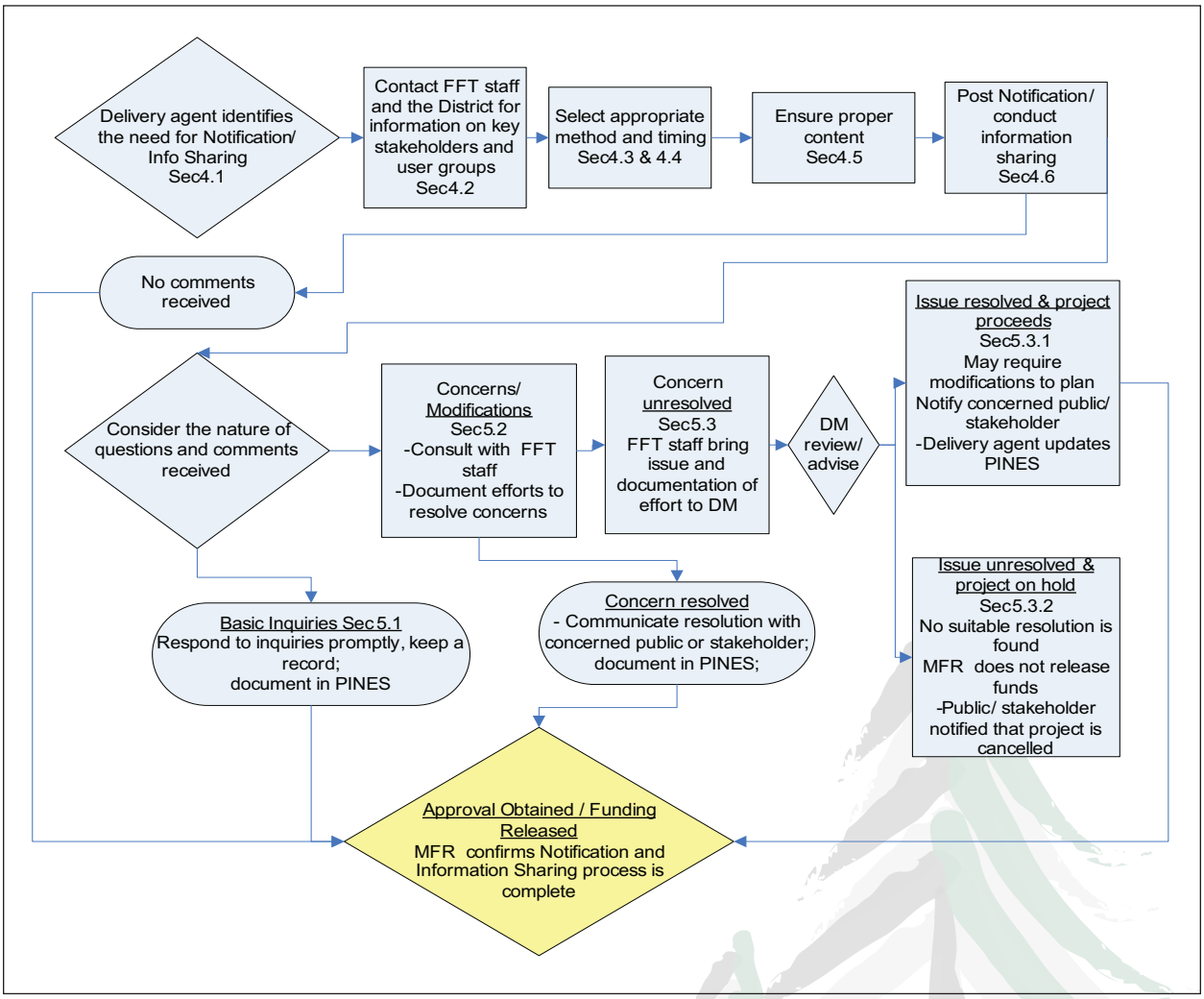
District Manager is responsible for:

- Reviewing and advising in cases in which the Delivery agent has not been able to find a resolution to the concerns raised by the public or a stakeholder

FFT Headquarters Staff are responsible for:

- Developing and revising the *Public Information Sharing and Notification Guidelines* over time
- Providing advice and support to Regional Staff and delivery agents as required

- Monitoring delivery agents to ensure that the appropriate actions were taken for information sharing and notification
- Confirming that information sharing and notification was done and any concerns resolved prior to approving the project and releasing funds.

8. Appendix A

FFT Public and Stakeholder Notification and Information Sharing