

Cassiar Timber Supply Area Timber Supply Review

Summary of Public Input

BC Ministry of Forests
Cassiar Forest District
Stikine and Commercial
General Delivery
Dease Lake, BC
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This is a summary of the public input that has been received on the Timber Supply Review in the Cassiar Timber Supply Area. This summary does not assess the feasibility or validity of the input or whether it relates to the clearly defined mandate of the chief forester in the allowable annual cut determination.

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Background

As part of the review of timber supply in the Cassiar Timber Supply Area, the British Columbia Forest Service distributed a *Public Discussion Paper* and two technical reports, the *Timber Supply Analysis* and the *Socio-Economic Analysis*. The public was encouraged to review and comment on the accuracy of the information in these documents and to provide additional information. This report summarizes the input received during the 90-day review period. This information was provided to the chief forester for his consideration when he reviewed the allowable annual cut for the Cassiar Timber Supply Area.

The first section of this summary outlines the public review process implemented by the Forest Service, and describes the types of public input received. The second section summarizes the public input in sufficient detail to indicate the range of input received. The original submissions (with personal identifiers removed in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*) can be reviewed at the Cassiar Forest District office in Dease Lake.

Public Review Process and Response

Cassiar Forest District staff actively solicited public input on the Timber Supply Review in the Cassiar Timber Supply Area through the following actions:

- direct mail-out of the three documents to over 130 individuals and organizations. The *Discussion Paper* included a response form which readers were encouraged to complete and return to the district manager
- advertisements in Whitehorse, Yukon; Juneau and Wrangell, Alaska; and Vancouver, Smithers and Dease Lake, B.C.

- articles in local and provincial newspapers
- 12 meetings and information sessions were held (see Table 1)
- radio interviews were provided

As Table 1 shows, about 130 individuals attended meetings and information sessions. The Cassiar Forest District office received 115 written submissions and response forms (see Appendix 1). In addition, a report titled, *Critique of the 1994 Cassiar Timber Supply Review* was submitted by Anderson *et al* of the Faculty of Forestry, University of British Columbia. This report is referred to as the technical critique in this summary.

BC Wild produced a brochure *Begging Questions: The Cassiar Timber Supply Analysis & the Ruin of B.C.'s Northwest Wilderness*. Fourteen groups indicated their support for the brochure. In addition, the Northwest Guides and Outfitters submitted a report *Assessment of Cassiar Timber Supply Review from a Fish, Wildlife and Biodiversity Perspective*.

Activities	(No. of participants)	Date (1995)
Meetings		
First Nations		
Kaska Tribal Council	(11)	Jan 19
Telegraph Creek Tahltan Band	(3)	Jan 26
Teslin Tlingit Band Council	(3)	Jan 30
Taku River Tlingit First Nation	(18)	Jan 31
Champagne/Aishihik Band	(3)	Feb 1
Tahltan Tribal Council	(8)	Feb 10
Iskut Tahltan Band	(1)	Feb 14
Information sessions		
Smithers	(20)	Jan 16
Stewart	(3)	Jan 17
Telegraph Creek	(16)	Jan 26
Atlin	(22)	Jan 31
Dease Lake	(22)	Feb 8

Table 1: Participation in public information activities

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Public Input

In this section, public input on the information presented in the three Timber Supply Review documents for the Cassiar Timber Supply Area is summarized under the following headings:

- timber supply analysis
- socio-economic analysis
- discussion paper

Public input on other ongoing government processes or other issues that may influence the timber supply in the Cassiar Timber Supply Area in the future is summarized at the end of this section.

Timber Supply Analysis

Technical critique

The technical critique suggests that while the Forest Service forecast of more than 800 000 cubic metres per year may seem technically feasible, there are a number of concerns regarding the forecast information. The critique concludes it is inappropriate to consider any significant expansion of timber activities, especially when there is a proven lack of demand, inadequate timber or ecological inventory, and little or no infrastructure to support an expansion.

The technical critique suggests that the timber supply is most likely over-stated. It cites the lack and/or inaccuracy of data used in the Forest Service analysis, including operable areas, visual corridors, age class and forest cover distribution, future growth and yield projections (especially for boreal regeneration), and the inventory and analysis of timber and non-timber resources.

The following specific points are raised in the technical critique:

- **Timber harvesting land base**
Another 80,000 hectares should be removed from the timber harvesting land base to address riparian and visual quality concerns. As well, further inventory and mapping work is needed to better define the land base and to remove some of the current data uncertainty.
- **Forest regeneration**
That growing seasons are short, environmental conditions harsh and tree growth slow in most of the Cassiar Timber Supply Area. The critique suggests the Forest Service projection of growth for regenerated forests was not adequately adjusted for northern conditions. It concludes the overall potential for timber production from managed stands in the next rotation is likely over-estimated.
- **Harvest distribution**
In the absence of a spatial timber supply model, the technical critique suggests that a separate sustainable yield and associated allowable annual cut be determined for each timber supply block. This would minimize the local impacts of bringing a 'natural forest' under management.
- **Wildfire losses**
The ecological importance and extent of fires in the boreal forest is well-documented, but the likelihood and importance of fires is underestimated. The critique states that the estimated annual loss to fire of 7,600 cubic metres of timber, used in the Forest Service analysis, is incorrect and recommends a different method to determine a more correct figure.

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Other Public Input

Most of the respondents have significant concerns that the uncertainties and broad assumptions in the Forest Service analysis do not provide a sound basis for decision-making. Many are concerned that even though the Forest Service acknowledged the inadequacies in the data in both the *Timber Supply Analysis Report* and the *Discussion Paper*, the Forest Service results would still be considered by the chief forester in determining an allowable annual cut. Some people specified inadequacies in the data, while others made more general comments.

The comments have been summarized into the following categories:

- **Forest inventory**

Most of the respondents who comment on the inventory data express concern that outdated forest inventory from the 1970s was used in the Forest Service analysis. The respondents suggest that the lack of harvesting and reforestation experience contributes to the difficulty in determining the degree of uncertainty regarding the data.

- **Boreal forest regeneration**

Many respondents are concerned the Forest Service does not understand how boreal ecosystems function, nor are they certain of the re-growth potential of the forest after harvesting.

- **Sensitive soils**

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans accepts conventional ground-based harvesting methods in most inland situations. However, they suggest that alternate methods may have to be adopted in areas that may be sensitive and/or prone to long-term damage by conventional methods (i.e., coastal areas, steep slopes, areas adjacent to sensitive fish habitat).

One submission suggests that further allowances be made in the Forest Service analysis for soil instability and inoperability.

- **Non-timber inventory information**

Many respondents suggest inventories of non-timber resources be completed and analyzed prior to an allowable annual cut determination. The Sierra Club notes the many sources of reliable information on non-timber resources for the Cassiar area and suggests these could have been incorporated into the Forest Service analysis to determine impacts on non-timber resources.

- **Wildlife**

Most respondents are concerned that the Forest Service analysis did not adequately address wildlife values. Of particular concern are the Spatsizi Plateau and the wildlife corridors on its eastern flanks which are world-renowned wildlife areas. Respondents express concern about the impacts of industrial disturbance, access (and associated poaching) or habitat fragmentation on the Kawdy caribou herd and the high quality grizzly bear habitat in the Taku River drainage and elsewhere.

The Sierra Club points out that the large carnivore ecosystems of the north are part of a global heritage. Friends of the Stikine observe that the Cassiar Timber Supply Area is home to 30 birds, fish and mammals on the provincial red list (endangered), 11 blue-listed (threatened) and six red-listed plant communities, and 207 blue-listed and 23 red-listed plant species.

Another respondent notes extensive wildlife enhancement projects have been carried out, including large controlled burns, reseeding and predator control. These projects have allowed various game animals

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to flourish, including Stone sheep (of which the hunter success level is unequaled in British Columbia), Dall sheep, elk and caribou.

Socio-Economic Analysis

- **Employment and community impacts**
The technical critique states that local communities depend heavily on the natural environment. It claims the expansion of infrastructure to support more industrial forestry may detract from wilderness values, and thereby harm the existing wilderness economies dependent on it. The critique suggests wilderness guiding, outfitting and adventure tourism industries should be considered legitimate or even preferred sources of employment and growth.

Most submissions reflect similar points made in the technical critique and suggest the Cassiar Timber Supply Review reports do not address the needs of the timber supply area communities or recognize the true value of the area as a long-term tourism and natural wildlife resource.

Nearly every respondent is concerned that increased harvesting and the expansion of infrastructure to support more industrial forestry will negatively impact wilderness values that currently provide employment. Another concern is that jobs created by an increase in forestry activities would be at the expense of jobs in wilderness-dependent industries like eco-tourism, guide-outfitting, trapping and fishing.

Several respondents suggest that the Cassiar's wilderness and wildlife can provide benefits to society indefinitely. They maintain that an increased harvest level, with its associated transportation networks and energy requirements, would impair the wilderness character of the area. This would jeopardize the livelihoods of those earning

their income from wilderness-associated businesses. About 20 per cent of the submissions indicated that an increased harvest level would destroy the quality of life enjoyed by residents.

The technical critique points out that the First Nations community in the Cassiar Timber Supply Area practice traditional activities such as hunting, fishing, berry gathering, guiding and trapping. It also notes the First Nations community is interested in assuming some of the responsibility for managing natural resources in the Cassiar Timber Supply Area.

Many submissions also note the Cassiar Timber Supply Area is one of the few remaining places in the world which still has options available in regard to future development. They point out that the communities in the area are not forest industry-dependent and express concern that if a forest-harvesting dependency is created, people and communities will suffer when future reductions in timber supply levels have to be made.

- **Economic impacts**
The technical critique contends the *Socio-Economic Analysis* is based on assumptions that are either unlikely or exceptionally optimistic. For example, large areas of the Cassiar Timber Supply Area may become protected or come under jurisdiction of First Nations, or there may be a long-term drop in the world price of wood products.

Some respondents point out the growing pressure to secure additional supplies of timber for southern mills. Also forest companies are looking to the Cassiar Timber Supply Area as having great potential to supply timber.

At the same time, some respondents claim the *Socio-Economic Analysis* fails to

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mention the increasing economic value of wilderness and wildlife as these resources are diminishing elsewhere. Their existence in the Cassiar Timber Supply Area is an increasing source of potential long-term economic benefit. Several respondents question whether a forest industry in the Cassiar Timber Supply Area is economically or ecologically viable in the long term, aside from small-scale logging for local use. Some also note that income from forestry would be greatly reduced by high costs for transportation, harvesting on steep terrain, and forest regeneration.

Approximately 40 per cent of the respondents claim the economic benefits from increased logging in the Cassiar are short term and would go to communities outside the timber supply area.

Ten respondents favour increased forestry activities. They maintain that a moderate allowable annual cut increase would offer the opportunity for increased employment, services, stability and diversity in the area, raising the overall standard of living in the communities of the Cassiar Timber Supply Area.

One respondent suggests a harvest level increase would make it more feasible to establish timber processing facilities within the Cassiar Timber Supply Area. Another suggests it may be feasible to augment the British Columbia timber supply with timber from the Yukon. A third respondent suggests offering a replaceable tenure of up to 300,000 cubic metres per year. Another respondent suggests doubling the Small Business Forest Enterprise program's harvest level.

The technical critique, however, states that any increased residential and municipal infrastructure resulting from economic

growth would be very difficult and expensive to maintain if it attracts southerners with expectations of middle-class suburban lifestyles. It also notes that the costs to the province for added road maintenance resulting from increased industrial activity and road traffic (e.g., elevated dust levels and carbon dioxide emissions) have not been addressed in the Forest Service analysis.

- **Environment impacts**

Several respondents are concerned the environmental impacts resulting from increased forestry activities were not accounted for in the *Socio-Economic Analysis*. In particular, they mention the analysis has not adequately addressed the impact on biodiversity, old growth maintenance, ecosystem representation, visual corridors, soil stability and riparian values.

BC Environment shares these concerns and notes that significant environmental impacts could occur if the variables and estimates generated by the Forest Service analysis are used to determine the allowable annual cut and the subsequent forest development.

A few submissions express concern that atmospheric carbon dioxide and the seasonal dynamics of the 'greenness' of the earth would be impacted by industrial activity in the north.

- **Wildlife**

The technical critique notes the Cassiar Timber Supply Area has a diversity of large mammals, birds and intact predator-prey systems. The critique contends the impacts of increasing road building, harvesting and other interventions on the landscape and resident wildlife populations are unknown.

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- **Fisheries**

A few respondents are concerned that fisheries resources of the northwestern rivers would be affected by industrial logging in the Cassiar Timber Supply Area. Particular reference is made to the Stikine watershed, including the salmon resources of the lower Stikine and Iskut, and the high cultural importance of salmon to the Telegraph Creek Tahltan and the Tlingit of coastal Alaska.

- **First Nations**

About 25 per cent of the respondents submit that the concerns of First Nations were not properly addressed in the Cassiar Timber Supply Review. These concerns include treaty negotiations, land claims, unemployment and lifestyle.

The Telegraph Creek Tahltans are most concerned about employment. They suggest increasing the allowable annual cut for the purpose of securing a forest licence and thus jobs for their people.

The Iskut Tahltans, however, oppose an allowable annual cut increase. They believe the forest inventory and socio-economic analysis are too inaccurate to justify an increase in the harvest level. In addition, they maintain the boreal forest is too environmentally sensitive to be harvested.

The Tahltan Tribal Council share the concerns of the Iskut Tahltan. Their other concerns include impacts on wildlife, poor harvesting practices, highway safety, economic benefits leaving the area, and access to their traditional territory. They maintain land claims should be settled before harvest levels are determined.

The Kaska Dena Tribal Council is concerned that the forest and non-forest inventories and *Socio-Economic Analysis* are

unreliable and inadequate. Their main contention is that an interim protection measure must be in place before a change to the allowable annual cut is made and new tenures are issued. They also say that land use and occupancy studies must be completed before a decision is made on harvest levels.

The Taku River Tlingits are concerned about the lack of consultation in the Cassiar Timber Supply Review, and assert that their approval must be given before any tenures or increased harvesting occur. They maintain treaties should be settled first.

The Tlingits are also concerned about the Forest Service's inadequate and inaccurate resource inventories, the limitation of considering only "current" management practices, and the timber bias in the *Socio-Economic Analysis*.

Discussion Paper

Several issues raised in the *Discussion Paper* prompted public input.

- **Allowable annual cut adjustment**
About 90 per cent of the submissions indicate a preference for maintaining the current harvest level, for a variety of reasons. Most state they oppose an allowable annual cut increase that is based on inaccurate and inadequate information.

Citing a lack of confidence in the data used in the analysis, 15 submissions suggest stopping all harvesting until further information is available.

BC Environment notes that forest development could adversely impact wilderness values and their associated economic benefits. They recommend that if there is going to be a harvest level increase,

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that an approach which has the least impact on the environment be taken until proper data is collected for realistic land use management.

About 25 per cent of the respondents indicate that until a comprehensive land management plan is in place, and land use objectives for the Cassiar Timber Supply

Area are set, the allowable annual cut should not be changed.

Ten submissions indicate support for an increase in the allowable annual cut. Some indicate the need for a cautious approach to increasing the harvest level.

Related processes and issues

Comments on other issues and ongoing government processes in the Cassiar Timber Supply Area are summarized here to indicate perspectives on issues that may influence timber supply in the future.

- **Timber Supply Review process**
About 20 per cent of the submissions claim the time frame between the presentation and the public input deadline was too short and the publicity regarding the availability of the reports and the public meetings was inadequate.

The technical critique strongly recommends that all analyses should emphasize "worst-case" as well as "base-case" scenarios.

- **Timber supply analysis**
The technical critique cites recent research that indicates non-spatial timber supply and forest harvesting models (as used for the Forest Service analysis) cannot adequately assess economic and environmental impacts. The technical critique suggests that spatial

models (i.e., those tied to a particular piece of the landscape) consistently provide lower timber supply estimates than do non-spatial approaches, such as those used by the Forest Service.

- **Other government initiatives**
Many respondents say a new allowable annual cut should not be established while the Protected Areas Strategy, the Commission on Resources and the Environment, the Forest Practices Code and land claim processes are ongoing. The technical critique recommends that future timber supply reviews must consider the impacts of those initiatives. As well the critique recommends direct public participation in the development of an integrated land management plan.
- **Allocation of the timber supply**
The technical critique suggests that any increase in the allowable cut should be preferentially offered to woodlot licensees, First Nations and other local community interests.
- **Forest management practices**
The technical critique suggests the primary management concern in the Cassiar Timber Supply Area should be to maintain a natural (or a nature-emulating and naturally functioning) landscape with a focus on fire dynamics. It maintains timber harvest levels cannot be set in isolation from a coordinated process of setting rational policies of fire suppression and prescribed burning.

Most respondents from Atlin express concern about the following:
 - clearcut logging,
 - large sales of timber blocks which exclude local bidders
 - offshore shipping of raw logs, and
 - the building of large lumber or pulp mills in the area.

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Two respondents suggest the implementation of ecosystem-based land management.

- **Creating a new timber supply area**
One respondent supported creating a new timber supply area with the headquarters in Stewart.

Appendix 1

Submissions received by the Cassiar Forest District

Local government

Kaska Dena Council
Tahltan Tribal Council
Tahltan & Iskut Bands
Iskut Band Council
Taku River Tlingits
District of Stewart
Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine
Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine, Director, Area D

Government agencies

BC Environment, Dease Lake
Government Agent, Dease Lake
Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Yukon and Northwest B.C.

Forest industry

Repap Carnaby/Smithers Operations
Decker Lake Forest Products
West Fraser Mills, Pacific Inland Resources Division
Houston Forest Products

Tourism industry

Sidka Tours
Red Goat Lodge
Spatsizi Wilderness Vacations
Cascade Interlink Aero Management Inc.
Eagle River Guide Outfitting
Clarke Action Photography
Canadian River Expeditions Ltd.
Collingwood Bros. Guides & Outfitters
Rivers West Enterprises
Taku Safari
Kawdy Outfitters
Cassiar Stone Outfitters
Context North
Kechika & Turnigan Adventures
Horsing Around Atlin

Interest groups

Steelhead Society of B.C. (two submissions)
Sierra Club of Western Canada (three submissions)
Friends of the Stikine (two submissions)
Endangered Spaces
Federation of B.C. Naturalists (two submissions)
B.C. Wildlife Federation (two submissions)
World Wildlife Fund
Faculty of Forestry, UBC
Driftwood Foundation
Northwest Guides & Outfitters Association (two submissions)
B.C. Wild (on behalf of 14 organizations)
Atlin Historical Society
Atlin Tourism Action Planning Committee
Dease Lake and Tahltan Chamber of Commerce

Individuals

Sixty-seven submissions