

CHIEF FORESTER GUIDANCE

2017 Wildfires Forest Retention

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OVERVIEW

The BC Chief Forester has published a technical guidance document (*2017 Wildfires – Forest Retention Guidance* <https://tinyurl.com/y7pybzbe>) to focus forest planners on ensuring salvage logging of the 2017 wildfire areas meets social, environmental and economic objectives. It provides forest planners with sound guidance that is supported by a good rationale and science. It is also an informative document for laypersons who are interested in the issue. However, there are some concerns that could jeopardize full utilization of the timber while meeting the objectives. The key points of interest in the guidance document are:

- 1) *“Six points of overarching guidance, in order of priority:*
 - a) *Ensure human safety and minimize damage to existing infrastructure.*
 - b) *Sustain, restore or enhance the capacity of ecosystems to provide ecosystem values, such as those related to water quality and wildlife habitat.*
 - c) *Consider the collective disturbances on the landscape to mitigate cumulative impacts on environmental and societal values.*
 - d) *Facilitate the adaptation of forests to improve resilience to climate change.*
 - e) *Minimize impacts to timber supply by shifting logging from un-damaged stands to damaged stands wherever possible.*
 - f) *Recover value from the burnt timber before the wood quality deteriorates.”*
- 2) The planning should be done on at the landscape level and not at the stand level.
 - a) This, in essence, requires forest planners to develop a landscape level plan which is a good approach and one that has been encouraged for some time.
 - b) Planning is to consider wildfire resiliency treatments to stands around communities and those with a high probability of supporting future large wildfires.
- 3) The planning is to be done by Licensees within a collaborative partnership involving local and provincial governments and First Nations.
 - a) An overseeing function is essential to provide the understanding, support and public confidence in the plans of the Licensees.
 - b) The partnership approach could provide the oversight, if applied accordingly.
- 4) The focus of decision-making is on “what to retain” not “what to log” with a priority on enhancing ecosystem resiliency.
 - a) This is a very sound approach but an unusual focus in BC forest resource planning.

- 5) The document is a comprehensive discussion of the technical guidance aspects, the rationale and scientific support related to planning the salvage logging by forest planners.
 - a) The document audience is primarily forest planners but contains a considerable amount of valuable information for laypersons interested in the issue and topic.

CONCERNS

Failure to resolve the following concerns, may jeopardize achieving the Chief Forester's objectives:

- 1) Will the Licensees expedite the developing of the landscape level plans given the short timeline of 1-2 years for capitalizing on the value of the burned timber? Forest planners have a large number of issues to consider to make a sound and justified plan. This takes time.
- 2) Will the Partners in the forest planning build a sound and effective working relationship quickly to review and submit plans?
- 3) Will Government permit approvals be expedited once the landscape level plans are submitted?
- 4) Will the Partnership, including the District Manager, be a good overseeing body to meet the guidance objectives of the Chief Forester and gender public confidence?

Hopefully all parties involved will work collaboratively and efficiently to address these concerns. If this is accomplished a major movement to long-term forest stewardship will be achieved.