

A SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT (SFM) FRAMEWORK FOR BC CROWN FORESTS

The implementation of SFM requires there be an actual plan of management. Such a plan gives purpose, meaning and direction to all the actions of forest protection, harvesting and renewal across the landscape. The overall objective is to first identify a future forest condition with all the features the public wishes to see in their public forests 50 to 100 years from now. Today's management to achieve the desired future forest, requires the features be quantified, as best as we are able, based on our current scientific understanding of forest dynamics and visual quality values, fish and wildlife habitat, watershed dynamics and biodiversity values at the tree, stand and landscape levels. The future forest is not just a woolly concept but a real, bounded, area-based forest condition at the scale of 100,000 to 200,000 hectares or 250 to 500 times the size of Stanley Park. We have known how to do this for over 20 years.

To reach this future condition, today's forest inventory needs to be grown into the future by computer modeling. BC has pioneered this work. We know how to do it and we can develop various scenarios of different planned actions in time and space that will produce different outcomes based on meeting public, Government and industry expectations. The desired outcomes must be chosen in consultation with the public, First Nations and the tenure holders. It's a social decision. This process of analysis and consultation requires a wide range of specialist expertise that must cooperate. This process reduces barriers between bureaucratic silos and helps the public, stakeholders and First Nations understand what is proposed and done.

Accountability lies in monitoring not just "forest practices" but real coordinated progress towards the future forest. We monitor to learn from successes and errors by adaptive management. The chosen set of actions form the basis for today's short term operating plans and have built within them a certain harvest level (Allowable Annual Cut) linked to a real spatial plan of management.

Such planning has initial costs but when considering public consultation and industry planning over time they are expected to decline as people become familiar with the process and collaboration. This essential planning process is not new. It is already in place in other provinces, notably Alberta, where all area-based tenures have such plans on the web. Most of the BC public forest does not have such SFM plans and they are not formally required. No wonder there is great dissatisfaction with the lack of vision and accountability in public forest management.

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