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Resource Stewardship Monitoring: Communicating with licensees

One of the primary communication goals of FREP is to promote the use of monitoring data and analysis to improve forest and range practices through three primary vehicles:

1. Open and transparent reporting,
2. Presenting results and recommendations to government decision makers; and
3. Presenting results (as well as monitoring tools and methods of assessment) to local “communities of practice”.

This document describes some ideas that district staff may wish to consider with respect to achieving 1 and 3 above. As professionals, both government and licensee forest practitioners must work together to improve forest practices at the local (district) level without requiring policy, legislative and regulatory changes. This is the essence of pro-professional reliance and discussion.

For the Forest and Range Evaluation Program (FREP), “closing the loop” refers to an evaluation and feedback cycle focused on improving sustainable forest resources management. Evaluation and feedback methods are continuously reviewed and improved to ensure they are based on the best available knowledge. Information generated by FREP must be delivered in a timely fashion to those in the field who develop, review and/or approve forest management plans and practices.

Communication styles and approaches will vary between target audiences. Communication may take a variety of forms from informal to formal meetings, publications, workshops, fieldtrips and the FREP website.

For FREP to be effective, discussion between professionals should occur at the local, forest district level. Staff who conduct Resource Stewardship Monitoring (RSM) should share results with licensees and provide feedback from their assessments. The following are some suggested methods of communication with licensees:

- Invite licensees out into the field to “kick the dirt”, observe data collection and discuss results at the source. This could occur at any time during the field season.
- Make licensees aware of the indicators and protocols so that they are aware of “why, what and how” we are doing our assessments.
- Discuss the status of trends of the cutblocks assessed and the averages for the district and province with licensees. Immediately entering your field data into FREP Information Management System (IMS) allows reports (pre-quality control) to be produced quicker for local discussion. Final reports will be generated following data verification each fall/winter -- Resource Value Team Leaders will complete full analysis of data collected in the field season after October each year; however localized reports can be shared once sufficient data is collected. Include interested parties in post monitoring meetings (e.g., as a “standing agenda” item for TSA/licensee meetings, community of practice workshops etc.) where results, including trends are discussed, successes shared and actions to improve discussed. Data presented at these meetings should not highlight any one licensee; rather include summaries of the district in general.

Key Messages for Licensees:

The primary key messages are the monitoring results, the indicators and the protocols. When communicating with licensees, consider the following additional messages:

- FREP is not C&E The objective of FREP is to evaluate whether practices under FRPA are meeting, not only the intent of current FRPA objectives, but also to determine whether forest and range practices and the legislation itself, are meeting government's broader intent for the sustainable use of British Columbia's natural resources.
- **The FREP Vision** -- Sustainability of forest and range resources through science and stewardship.
- **The FREP Mission** -- To be a world leader in resource stewardship monitoring and effectiveness evaluations; providing the science-based information needed for decision-making and continuous improvement of British Columbia's forest and range practices, policies and legislation.
- FREP has been developed and structured to ensure "continuous improvement" of all aspects of the program. This structure is designed to ensure that the program asks and answers the right questions. The FREP questions are based on determining the sustainability, or health, of the resource values identified under FRPA; and are as a result, directly linked to the overall program objective of "determining whether forest and range practices and the legislation itself, are meeting government's broader intent for the sustainable use of our natural resources."
- Once the right questions are defined, FREP develops indicators to answer the questions, collects the right information (data); and conducts data analysis on which to base recommendations for improvements to practices, policies or legislation. This cycle will ensure that the objectives British Columbia has set for the 11 resource values can be met, and that the process for assessing whether the objectives have, in fact been met, is open and accountable to the public. Detailed business models and other FREP products can be found on the FREP website.
- FREP is about evaluating forest legislation, policies, and practices and not about targeting individual the industry's performance the sites are randomly selected to ensure statistical accuracy.
- Communicating monitoring results, both positive and negative, is an important component of professional reliance and will help improve forest practices at the local level.
- Licensees are welcome to use the protocols and field cards for their own monitoring uses where there is space, they are welcome to attend training and come out in the field during data collection.

Tools for Communicating with District-level Stakeholders:

- The FREP website: <http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfp/frep/index.htm> -- the specific communications tools for district staff listed below will be posted under the RSM link (<http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfp/frep/rsm/index.htm>).
- The FREP brochure (hard copies or web copy) will be provided to all district contacts.
- The FREP logo will be placed on the website for optional use when putting presentations together.
- Communications "lessons learned/ what's working what isn't" and "common questions and suggested responses" will be placed on the website. Please email your suggestions to Frank Barber.
- A four page FREP program-level update that can be used for internal and external communication will be posted on the web

- Communication will be a standing topic on the monthly RSM conference calls.
- Any individual district presentations, PowerPoint etc., that are submitted, will be posted for others to review and use.
- Communication skills training and discussions will be included in the annual FREP Continuous Improvement session, and
- “Communities of practice” information will be posted on the website and distributed as appropriate.

Principles of successful communication

1. Be clear, straightforward and honest.
2. Know the purpose of your communication. Be clear about what it is that you want to share.
3. Clearly describe what if any, point or points are you trying to make. Is there an issue, is something working, do we have a solution or not?
4. Be sure someone cares. Ensure the communication provides an answer to "why is this important to me?" and (or) "why should I listen to, watch or read this?"
5. Keep it as simple as possible while maintaining an accurate message. For example, use a clear and clean graph rather than a detailed graph with loads of data to show a trend or outcome. Reference the original materials for those who wish to follow up. Remember a picture tells a thousand words still works.
6. Tailor your presentation to the group you are targeting – e.g., provide a different level of detail for managers than practitioners. In all cases keep jargon, slang and acronyms to a minimum.
7. Choose communication venues to reach specific target audiences carefully. Some people read detailed reports, others do not, so if you want to reach those who do not, find another method of communication.
8. Match the level of sophistication of the communication format with the target group, some find over done presentations offensive. (e.g., if you do not need fractionated sequencing in PowerPoint to help make your point, do not use it).
9. Use a range of approaches. It is know that people learn in different ways. Provide options and variety in your approach.
10. Seek out constructive feedback and modify your approach(es) based on their input.

Regional Communication Responsibilities:

- Setting expectations for the yearly reporting in the Business Area 2 with this expectation being 100 per cent of the districts eporting to licensees. The timelines for reporting of last years data are to be done by March 31 of the following year.
- Regional level communication with management teams and licensees

Branch Communication Responsibilities:

Staff at the Forest Practices Branch have the responsibility to communicate the provincial roll-up of resource stewardship monitoring results and the outcomes of intensive evaluations. Branch staff are also responsible for informing the Branch director and Chief Forester of issues that may require either legilative changes, suggested guidance documents or the sharing of best management practices. Branch staff will ensure communications with other agencies (e.g., Forest Practices Board), associations (e.g., ABCFP, ENGOs, COFI, and CFPA etc.) senior management (e.g., JMC, JSC, ODMT, OLT, FSDMT and Executive).