

Cariboo Woodlot Association Proposal – Summary Description

The Cariboo Woodlot Association, in cooperation with the South Cariboo and Quesnel Woodlot Associations, proposes to pilot test an innovative approach to managing woodlots that would streamline administration, and place increased responsibility and accountability on woodlot licensees to manage their woodlots to the standards of the Forest Practices Code.

The pilot project proposes to replace the existing approval process for woodlots with a comprehensive Woodlot Plan (WP) developed by the woodlot licensee. The WP will describe the short- and long-term management strategies for the woodlot, and identify clearly defined, measurable management objectives. Higher level plan direction and information from resource inventories, assessments and classifications will be incorporated into the WP. The project will test and define the scope and content requirements for a WP in order to achieve effective management.

The WP will be approved by the appropriate statutory decision maker(s), for an indefinite term, subject to revisions. The woodlot licensee will be responsible for addressing new information as it becomes available, and if necessary, amending the WP.

There will be a one-time advertising of WPs. The public and stakeholders will be encouraged to review and comment on the plan; however, there would be no further routine referrals or public advertising, except where significant change requires a new WP. Stakeholders and members of the public with site-specific interests in the woodlot will be encouraged to approach the licensee directly. An annual audit will evaluate how well the licensee addressed public and stakeholder concerns.

WPs will be referred to First Nations to address traditional rights and uses on a woodlot-wide basis. At a minimum, First Nations will receive a copy of the woodlot's annual report, and it is proposed that the licensee conduct an annual field tour. The pilot will address giving First Nations a role in the audit process. The pilot will also assess how the legal requirements for the Crown's fiduciary responsibility to First Nations can be discharged in a manner that is acceptable to first Nations and administratively efficient for government.

The licensee will be free to manage their woodlot within the stated management strategies and objectives outlined in the WP. One of the challenges of the pilot will be to better define the degree of freedom by which a licensee will be allowed to manage a woodlot.

The pilot also proposes to test new concepts on how to appraise timber on woodlots, such as:

- establishing a stumpage rate for timber within a management unit as per the measurable objectives stated in the WP,
- assessing options for establishing a woodlot-wide stumpage rate,

- testing a mechanism to carry out intensive silviculture as a specified operation in the stumpage appraisal.

Licensees will be required to provide a detailed annual report on woodlot activities to First Nations, resource agencies, and the public. The annual report will include specific accomplishments related to the WP, and a summary of all communications with the public, stakeholders and First Nations.

Performance will be checked and evaluated using an audit-based approach, the format and content of which will be developed and tested as part of the pilot project.

The pilot will identify and examine ways of improving woodlot management, including:

- improved reforestation standards,
- examining models and mechanisms for creating incentives for reinvesting in silviculture, by both the licensee and the Crown. For example, cost-sharing arrangements where the licensee would contribute up to 25% of the cost for treatments on the Crown portion of a woodlot, while the remaining 75% would be funded as a specified operation under the stumpage appraisal system.

Up to six woodlots, or approximately 3% of the woodlot AAC in the Cariboo Forest Region, will be involved in the pilot project. Only those licensees with track records for compliance with current administrative requirements and demonstrated exemplary forest practices will be considered as pilot candidates. The selection process will be done in consultation with the Ministry of Forests, and the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks.

Pilot evaluation audits will focus on assessing effectiveness and efficiencies:

Effectiveness:

- assess the overall management of the woodlot for consistency with the WP,
- measure performance against stated management goals and objectives,
- identify any shortcomings or deficiencies in management,
- assess the woodlot for new, innovative or creative management practices.

Efficiencies:

- provide estimates of staff time and cost savings.

Evaluations will be conducted annually by a Pilot Evaluation Team comprised of representatives from the proponent woodlot associations, the Ministry of Forests, and the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks. The licensee will also participate in the evaluation process. Individual pilots are expected to run from 2 to 10 years.