

Summary of Public Input and Actions Taken or Proposed

Weyerhaeuser-Stillwater Timberlands,
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Background

In the summer of 1999, the BC Government established a program for creating pilot projects to explore more efficient and less costly ways to combine forest management with the protection of social and environmental values.

The government set out tests that proposed projects must pass to gain approval. These tests include:

- Provide at least the equivalent protection of forest resources as under the present Forest Practices Code;
- Have in place an approved higher-level plan or regulation that balances competing values and interests within the project area;
- Ensure there is ongoing public review and maintain public access to all planning documents, assessments and records associated with the project;
- Maintain the role of the provincial Forest Practices Board; and
- Provide a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the project's performance.

Pilot Project Summary

The pilot project improves the regulatory framework for forest practices by collapsing five separate planning and permit requirements to two. The new process will provide significant benefits to Weyerhaeuser in reducing administrative costs, decreasing log inventory costs and speeding up response to react to market opportunities. Cost savings to government will also occur by reducing the processing time associated with plans and permits, thereby freeing up staff to spend more time in the field overseeing high quality forest resource management.

Balancing Competing Values and Interests

- The regulation calls for the land area to be mapped into different zones with unique management objectives. These objectives provide for a broad scope of forest management activities, ranging from 100% retention) to areas where the management emphasis is timber harvesting.
- The pilot incorporates new forest management systems known collectively as Variable Retention to provide a greater degree of flexibility than clearcutting, which is phased out under the pilot.
- There has been a public process whereby the zoning and objectives have been agreed to with an autonomous community advisory group (CAG), representative of a cross-section of community groups and values, set up to encourage early and ongoing involvement in the forest management planning and operations process.

Forest Stewardship Plan (FSP)

- At the core of the Pilot Project is the Forest Stewardship Plan with five primary objectives:
 - Encourage early and ongoing public participation in planning;
 - Focus on landscape level planning;
 - Maintain or improve current environmental protection;
 - Provide flexibility to adapt to market fluctuations, and
 - Shift the forest management focus from office approvals to field results.
- The Forest Stewardship Plan will employ an expanded public consultation process, a “live” landscape level plan, and a system of measurable performance indicators for management activities.
- The 28 member CAG is a permanent body that will provide input into the landscape level plan, participate in drafting values, goals and indicators, and monitor and comment upon ongoing forest management performance. In addition the wider public will have the opportunity to review and provide comment on the proposed FSP and any subsequent amendments.
- Safeguards are provided to ensure that the District Manager will be required to address particular public concerns in contentions areas, as well as cultural heritage resources, prior to approving a cutting permit.

Compliance and Enforcement

The pilot project will not compromise the substance or standards of the Forest Practices Code. In support of this, the Ministry of Forests will retain the power to inspect forest operations, and to ensure that the Code’s requirements are met through remediation orders, administrative penalties and prosecution powers.

Forest Practices Board

The role of the Forest Practices Board is maintained. The regulation specifically provides Board oversight of the forest stewardship planning process similar to that for present Code development plans. This was agreed to with Board staff following consultation to ensure Board concerns were met.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- The monitoring and evaluation criteria for the Pilot Project will be designed around five key indicators:
 - environmental performance,
 - flexible and adaptive planning and approval process,
 - public participation in the planning process,
 - cost of the planning and approval process, to both government and industry, and
 - adaptive management
- Some of the criteria (indicators and targets) will be developed through the CAG, consistent with CSA certification requirements. They will be contained in the forest stewardship plan.

- MoF and MoELP staff at the district and region level will also participate in formulation of management strategies, indicators and standards that will be written into the FSP.
- In addition to third party audits under certification systems, the regulation will call for an annual joint audit by government agencies and Weyerhaeuser.
- The field results of monitoring and evaluation will be applied in an adaptive management framework to strive for continuous improvement in forest management practices.

Public Review Process

Weyerhaeuser-Stillwater staff actively solicited public input on the Code pilot through the following actions:

- The detailed proposal and draft regulation were made available at the Weyerhaeuser-Stillwater office in Powell River for a period of 72 days.
- Meetings were held with First Nations with interests in the pilot area.
- Presentations were made, and copies of the detailed proposal and regulation given to, the Forest Caucus of the BC Environmental Network and staff and members of the Forest Practices Board.
- Two open houses were held and were advertised on local radio and in the local newspaper. In total 73 persons attended the open houses and provided comment. At least as many again attended but did not provide comment.
- Many information and discussion sessions were held with the CAG. In addition, a representative of the BCEN made a presentation of BCEN comments to the CAG at its request.
- Weyerhaeuser has responded in writing to all written comments and letters received.
- Following comprehensive review of the public comments received, Weyerhaeuser and the CAG achieved agreement on the entire zoning package that underpins the provision for balancing competing values and interests.

Public Input

Weyerhaeuser-Stillwater received over 131 written comments, either at the open houses or in the form of letters. Those comments are summarized under the following headings.

- Land Zoning
- Code Pilot Regulation
- Forest Stewardship Plan
- Community Advisory Group/Public Participation
- Adaptive Management
- Socio-economic issues
- Other comments

Land Zoning

Comments on zoning were both general and specific, including statements supporting or not supporting the proposal.

Some respondents stated their support for the proposal and complimented Weyerhaeuser on the consideration shown to protecting non-timber resources.

Other respondents expressed concerns that additional protection should be made in the form of:

- more and larger old growth reserves,
- wider and more extensive buffers around lakes, waterways and trails,
- more reserves to protect habitat for grizzly bear, mountain goat and marbled murrelet,
- intact ecosystems,
- greater emphasis on tourism values and a separation of tourism and recreation zones.

Actions Taken or Proposed

- Weyerhaeuser and the CAG, after intensive discussions, achieved unanimous agreement on a package of old growth zones in which retention rates will range from 66%-100%.
- Weyerhaeuser and the CAG have agreed to 30meter buffers along certain lakes and trails. In response to the public comments received a new agreement has been reached to extend the application of buffers to additional areas. Buffer specifics will be applied through the FSP.
- Weyerhaeuser will apply the variable retention system through the FSP to provide for leaving varying amounts of timber in 4 distinct zones to ensure protection of non-timber resources, including habitats and biodiversity. The plan will be developed in consultation with the CAG, First Nations and the public at large.
- Weyerhaeuser and the CAG have arrived at complete agreement on the degree of wildlife protection offered up in the pilot. A few public and CAG members are seeking greater protection, such as intact ecosystems, beyond the scope of the pilot; and which, in Weyerhaeuser's view, belong in the recently announced LRMP process.
- Weyerhaeuser and the CAG believe an appropriate level of consideration has been given to tourism. Detailed strategies and targets will follow in the Forest Stewardship Plan.
- Weyerhaeuser will cooperate with MOF and MELP to ensure that objectives for grizzly bear, mountain goats, marbled murrelet and deer habitat are completed prior to the discontinuation of the forest development plan.

Code Pilot Regulation

Many comments received expressed views and concerns around the general question of how will the public interest be maintained in the proposed context of fewer plans and permits with fewer approvals by government. Examples of these concerns include:

- Too much reliance is placed on the FSP as the place for performance indicators and targets.

- Need a process for conflict resolution when company and community needs are in conflict.
- Public review and comment and an “adequate management and conserve test” should be required prior to the approval of all cutting permits.
- Regulation should call for the company to do inventories for baseline data against which to measure performance, and contain a rationale to show how strategies and targets will achieve management objectives.
- Relaxed legislation may set up loopholes, such as the “grade-setting” issue, so trust is a concern.

Other comments concerning the regulation outlined more specific concerns, including:

- Regulation should contain more specifics such as soil protection, detailed targets and standards for silviculture record keeping.
- Community water supplies need to be protected. Riparian assessments should continue to be required and made available for public review and comment in community watersheds.
- Require draft landscape unit objectives prior to the approval of the FSP and require the FSP to comply with or exceed those objectives.
- Require the Chief Forester to consider the impacts of management objectives in setting the Annual Allowable Cut.
- The regulation must ensure that the powers of the Forest Practices Board are maintained.

Actions Taken or Proposed

- Weyerhaeuser has cooperated fully with legislative counsel in developing a regulation that meets the tests of part 10.1 of the *Code*, designed to ensure appropriate accountability.
- Weyerhaeuser respectfully disagrees with the notion of advertising cutting permit applications or applying an adequately manage and conserve test at the CP stage, as both the test and public comment steps are applied prior to submission of the CP application, through approval of the FSP. The regulation now specifically calls for site plans to be prepared and signed by a professional forester.
- Weyerhaeuser does not believe that the regulation is the place for baseline inventory requirements, and proposes that best information be used, updated and improved as is timely and practical through the FSP process.
- Weyerhaeuser proposes that the FSP is the best place for rationales supporting strategies and targets.
- The proposal does not diminish compliance and enforcement oversight. Therefore it is not deemed necessary to take action concerning perceived issues of trust of industry.
- Weyerhaeuser proposes that detailed specifics such as soil protection, targets and standards will be contained in the FSP, which needs to be completed before implementation of the pilot.
- Weyerhaeuser agrees that community watersheds need special consideration and the regulation has been amended to identify watersheds as a specific area of concern on the FSP.
- Weyerhaeuser does not agree that it is necessary to have interim Landscape Unit objectives prior to implementation of the pilot. It is proposed that the requirement for development plans continue until objectives for grizzly bear, mountain goats, marbled murrelets and deer habitat are done.
- Weyerhaeuser respectfully submits that the Chief Forester’s discretion and powers are not altered under the pilot.
- Weyerhaeuser has amended the proposal to ensure the powers of the Forest Practices Board continue in a manner comparable to developments plans under the *Code*.

Forest Stewardship Plan

A number of specific forest resource management comments were made. Under the pilot these matters will be managed through the Forest Stewardship Plan approval and amendment process.

The comments include:

- Need to maintain or increase water capacity and look at logging impacts on level of water table.
- Stop herbicide and pesticide use.
- Management plans need to consider recreation/tourism and CAG values.
- Selectively log recreation/tourism areas and buffers.
- Trails need to be carefully managed, protected and restored after harvesting.
- Need less road deactivation.
- Protect species and ecosystems listed as Red, Blue or Yellow

Actions Taken or Proposed

- Weyerhaeuser has provided a resource value goal for water resources in the regulation, will develop detailed strategies and targets in the FSP and community watersheds will be identified on the FSP as specific areas of public concern.
- The regulation contains a resource value goal to strive for practical alternatives to herbicides. Strategies will be contained in the FSP.
- The regulation contains resource value goals for recreation and tourism resources. Detailed strategies will be provided in the FSP following close consultation with the CAG, which has 4 of 14 seats allocated to recreation and tourism. These strategies will include variable retention levels and buffer targets to protect visual, buffer and trail values.
- Weyerhaeuser has committed to do an annual access management plan in close consultation with the CAG to deliver the detailed strategies and targets that will be contained in the FSP.
- The regulation requires the completion of objectives for grizzly bear, mountain goat, marbled murrelet and deer habitat which will, in part, strive for the conservation of species and ecosystems. The FSP must then include detailed strategies and measurable targets consistent with those objectives.

Community Advisory Group/Public Participation

The great majority of respondents fully support the CAG process. Some comments are supportive, but suggest a need for wider public participation both regionally and locally is needed. A very few do not support the process. Examples of comments:

- Need public assurance that technical/policy aspects are given adequate consideration.
- CAG does not have sufficient capacity support to do its job and is not fully representative.
- CAG needs to incorporate community knowledge and report back to the public.
- Need a process to identify and fill gaps, and get missing input.
- Process needs to be open to public at all stages.
- Need to clearly identify and define public participation and make public requests for monitoring logging sites.

Actions Taken or Proposed

- Weyerhaeuser stresses that the CAG is an autonomous, permanent body that represents a broad section of the community. Weyerhaeuser and the CAG are satisfied that the group continues to enjoy the support of the broad community. Weyerhaeuser will continue to provide the facilitation and other operating expenses, as well as technical support along with MOF and MELP.
- The CAG currently meets bi-monthly, with alternate meetings open to the public and advertised in the local newspaper, thereby giving any members of the public the opportunity to monitor CAG activities and provide any input around perceived gaps or community knowledge. Also the CAG will participate with Weyerhaeuser in annual open houses, thereby reporting back to the public.
- The regulation places clear onus on Weyerhaeuser to ensure advertising the FSP and any amendments and to provide comment and proposed actions to government in the approval process. Also, Weyerhaeuser will be maintaining a monthly updated operational information map, which will be available for public perusal and input at any time. This provides the broader public with the opportunity for ongoing oversight.
- The regulation has been amended to require cutblocks be shown on the operational information map for 30 days prior to application for a cutting permit.

Adaptive Management

Some comments were received that bear on the process of continually improving forest management based on a framework of adaptive management:

- Need improved inventories, data-bases and assessment strategies at landscape and stand levels. This will call for more funding and staffing.
- Audits done by BCEN, MOF, MELP and third parties would help by having the analyses made available to CAG.
- Look into and react to the interconnectedness of environmental factors.
- Evaluate the pilot project based on FSC and CSA standards.

Actions Taken or Proposed

- Weyerhaeuser will provide commitments concerning inventories and establishment of baseline data in the FSP.
- Weyerhaeuser will welcome or participate in audits that will measure both the achievement and efficacy of strategies and targets. These audits will include joint licensee/MOF/MELP annual audits, third party audits and Forest Practices Board Audits.
- The interconnectedness of environmental factors will be given consideration at the planning and monitoring and evaluation stages. Weyerhaeuser will strive to consider the interrelationship of all detailed strategies and targets in the FSP to a practical extent and in assessing impacts and changes following audits.
- Weyerhaeuser and the CAG are working together toward CSA certification based on the 6 criteria and 21 critical elements for sustainable forest management established by the Canadian Council of Forest Ministers. Weyerhaeuser is prepared to work with the FSC regional standards when they are developed.

Socio-economic Issues

A number of comments concerning local socio-economic matters were received. Some examples include:

- Need more local manufacturing and value added processing
- Need to place more emphasis on tourism.
- Need an analysis of the value of botanical forest products.
- There are insufficient social analyses and links to social policy.
- Return 10% - 15% of TFL lands to the community.
- There are too many logs “exported” from the Powell River area with little benefit to the community.

Actions Taken or Proposed

- Weyerhaeuser, in close consultation with CAG, will develop strategies and measurable targets designed to ensure an appropriate sustainable log supply to local small business value-added operators.
- The CAG has a seat dedicated to tourism and the regulation contains a resource value goal for tourism. Weyerhaeuser suggests these measures will provide for an appropriate ongoing balance in providing direction to the detailed strategies and targets to be included in the FSP. The regulation creates 7 Recreation and Tourism stewardship zones where the management focus is on recreation and tourism.
- The regulation has a resource value goal that calls for forest planning to minimize forestry impacts and enable access to botanical forest products concurrent with harvesting development. Based on public and CAG input and using existing data and analyses, Weyerhaeuser will develop detailed strategies in the FSP.
- Weyerhaeuser submits that matters such as social analyses and policy, community tenure and the destination of logs harvested on the TFL are outside the scope of the pilot and do not require actions.

Other Comments

A few additional comments were received that do not directly affect the Code pilot project. Some examples:

- Need to link to other government agencies and other Code pilots.
- The pilot should aim for high global standards such as the UNESCO checklist.
- The process falls short of a strategic planning process.
- Tie the pilot to a process of regional stewardship within the broader Malaspina peninsula.
- Recreate habitat for all species and have long-term habitat reclamation.
- The legal implications of the pilot may suggest a subsidy re the softwood lumber trade issue.
- Need an analysis of the value of botanical forest products

Actions Taken or Proposed

- Weyerhaeuser suggests that these issues while of concern lie outside the scope of the pilot project. No further actions on these matters are proposed, except that Weyerhaeuser will be pleased to support and participate in the LRMP recently announced by the Premier for the entire Sunshine Coast Forest District.