

FSP Stocking standard guidance and messaging

Dated October 31, 2006

A number of issues related to FSP stocking standards were identified and presented to the Coast Regional FRPA Implementation Team (CRIT) for possible resolution. The CRIT reviewed each of these issues and either: 1) agreed on a position to address the issue or 2) assigned the issue to the CRIT Silvicultural Systems working group. Issues assigned to this working group were further split into short term (within a few weeks) or long term.

This note reflects what was agreed to at the CRIT meeting or subsequently recommended by the working group. The objective of this note is to assist with local discussions regarding stocking standards submitted along with an FSP. It generally reflects the current thinking of CRIT but it may not be applicable in every circumstance.

1) Multi-block stocking standard

A multi-block stocking standard can be best described as a standard that specifies a condition that must be met over a series of multiple standard units or blocks. A multi-block stocking standard can take many different forms and may not always be easily identified. A multi-block stocking standard may be a condition that must be met in addition to a standard unit level standard or it might be a condition that must be met over many standard units covering several different locations.

Any standard that represents a multi-block approach to defining a free growing stocking standard requires Chief Forester approval as per FPPR 16 (3) (d). There is a separate review process completed by Forest Practices Branch staff for “multi-block” standards prior to the Chief Forester making his determination.

It is suggested that where licensees, as part of their stocking standard submissions, specify a condition that must be met over more than one standard unit that they include the intent behind the standard if it is not clear as to whether the proposed standard is a single or multi-block standard. The intent behind the multi-block stocking standard approach was to provide licensees some flexibility to apply standards such as minimum preferred species at the landscape level.

Where licensees intend to use a multi-block approach to defining stocking standards it should be clearly communicated to district staff during the initial expectation meeting. An appropriate level of supporting information should be included with any proposed multi-block stocking standard.

District staff are advised to forward any FSP stocking standards to Regional or Forest Practices Branch staff where a standard appears as a condition that must be met on more than one standard unit or block.

2) Application of alder or other broadleaf species towards meeting silviculture obligations

Broadleaf species (Dr, Act, Mb, Ep etc) should only be used to fulfill silviculture obligations (ie included as part of FSP stocking standard) if;

Deemed ecologically acceptable as a forest crop either as pure broadleaf or mixedwood stands on the basis of;

- Currently included within the forest management assumptions regarding estimation of volume contributing to timber supply
- A long term forest management strategy (included as part of FSP) that provides for stated management objectives for broadleaf species and demonstrates a reasonable regard for future timber supply for the management unit
- A specified application – for example a rotation crop for managing root disease centers
- Limited scope and scale – for example an operational trial

3) Multi-storied stocking standards associated with uneven-aged management

Multi-storied stocking standards associated with uneven-aged management or high levels of dispersed retention over the rotation should only be used to fulfill silviculture obligations when;

- Consistent with an appropriate silvicultural system (for example single tree selection)
- Consistent specific management objectives (for example visual quality objectives)

Where multi-storied stocking standards are included as part of the FSP submission they should include detailed supporting information describing when and where within the management unit, they will be applied. Where partial harvesting has not been considered as part of the forest management assumptions contributing to estimating volume for timber supply purposes a rationale should be included demonstrating how the standards have reasonable regards for future timber supply including the specific forest management objectives the standards will meet (eg visual quality objective) and the relative risk to future timber supply. The multi-storied stocking standards should also clearly articulate the leave tree criteria that will be used to determine acceptable retention trees that will be used to contribute towards meeting the silviculture obligation.

4) Stratification

Some FSP stocking standards are specifying that a minimum stocking standard apply over a standard unit as an average rather than over the entire net area to be reforested, in essence removing any requirement to stratify within a standard unit. It has always been the Coast position that any portion of an area that can be reasonably stratified must meet the specified minimum stocking standard.

Lack of stratification may result in clumped distribution of stocking, unacceptable patches of NSR, as well as reduced site occupancy and growing potential. This represents an unacceptable risk to future timber supply.

It is suggested that licensees continue to assess free growing standards based on past guidance that has been provided by District managers, guidebooks, and policy letters with respect to stratification. It is also suggested that FSP stocking standards not be developed in such a way that preclude stratification for assessment of free growing for compliance purposes. Districts and licensees are encouraged to monitor free growing declarations with respect to the level of stratification.

5) Minimum inter-tree distance

Many FSP stocking standard submissions are proposing minimum inter-tree distances (MITD) below the currently accepted default of 2.0 meters. Reduced MITD may have a similar effect to reducing the stocking standard.

Proposed reductions in MITD within FSP stocking standards should be accompanied by a rationale as well as guidelines for application as to where and when the reductions will occur.

6) Target stocking levels

Some FSP stocking standard submissions have not included target stocking levels. A standard with no target has the effect of removing the M value for the MOFR silviculture survey procedure.

To avoid confusion as to how an FSP stocking standard will be measured a target level of stocking should be included as part of the stocking standard.

7) Intermediate cut standards

Where intermediate cut stocking standards (FPPR 44 standards with no regeneration obligation) are included as parts of the FSP submission they must include detailed supporting information describing the situations and circumstances that determine when and where within the management unit they will be applied. These situations and circumstances should be linked to other forest management objectives where possible. The intermediate cut stocking standards should also clearly articulate the leave tree criteria that will be used to determine acceptable retention trees that will be used to contribute towards meeting the silviculture obligation.

8) Minimum height to brush ratio

A free growing stand is defined under FRPA as a stand of healthy trees of a commercially valuable species, the growth of which is not impeded by competition from plants, shrubs or other trees.

The minimum height to brush ratio is not a FRPA content requirement therefore licensees may choose not to include one. This provides the licensee some flexibility in terms of how to meet the definition of a free growing stand.

Where licensees choose to specify a minimum height to brush ratio as part of there FSP stocking standard they may use to the free growing criteria contained within Appendix 9 of *Establishment to Free Growing Guidebook* or propose an alternative height to brush ratio with a suitable rationale.

9) Species

The following concerns with respect to the species under proposed FSP stocking standards have been identified:

- Broad scale application of perceived low value species such as Hw over a wide range of conditions with no restrictions on use.
- Lack of consistency with previous information and reference material with respect to species selection (for example the reference guide to FDP stocking standards 2003).
- Lack of the preferred and acceptable format for identifying species as part of a stocking standard.
- Lack of scientifically based rationale with respect to species selection choices

The CRIT silviculture system working group has agreed to draft a discussion paper to address species selection issues associated with FSP stocking standards by the middle of December 2006.