

Background

The Private Managed Forest Land Council engaged a team of independent professional foresters to complete an inspection of selected managed forests during the fall and winter of 2007 to 2008. These inspections are an important component of the Managed Forest program and the Council's function in monitoring the implementation of forest practices on managed forest land.

This report provides an executive summary of the inspections. The inspection team is familiar with operations on private forest land and the object of the Private Managed Forest Land legislation. The purpose of the inspections was to assess owners' performance in managing their forest properties with respect to the management commitments and legislation, and to assess owners' knowledge of private managed forest regulations, specifically, the 2007 Private Managed Forest Land Council Regulation that took effect on September 1, 2007.

Some 49 managed forests were selected for inspection; 13 in the interior and 36 on the coast. This sample represents 22% of managed forests in the program and comprised of a range of large to small properties. The 13 selected managed forests in the interior of the province were located in the Kootenay area; these inspections took place October and November 2007. The 36 selected managed forests in the coastal region were located on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands; and these inspections took place January to March 2008.

Discussions were held with each owner regarding forest management activities on each property. This provided owners with an opportunity to discuss the recently amended Council regulation, and bring forward any questions or concerns they had. A sample of activities was inspected; they consisted of observations of recent harvesting including the protection of fish streams, the condition of new constructed or maintained roads, and the status of newly reforested cutblocks and the tending of regenerated stands.

Properties

The sample of properties inspected ranged from active owners where forest management activities, particularly harvesting, are ongoing and relatively constant, to less active holdings where there was no timber harvesting in the past two years except for timber salvage and firewood cutting; while a few had some small scale harvesting and/or road building.



**Mixed age stand with new seedlings
protected from browsing**



**Rehabilitated and planted former road
location**

Observations

1. Knowledge of legislative requirements

The inspectors found that the owners of the more active holdings were more up to date on regulatory requirements. The owners were found to have procedures in place to deal with potential environmental events such as road maintenance issues or landslides. Harvesting, road construction and maintenance, and regeneration strategies were found to be in line with management commitments and the Council regulation. No issues were noted with respect to classifying streams and protecting fish habitat and drinking water quality as required by the Council regulation.

The owners of 16 of the less active holdings on both the Coast and the Interior were found to have limited understanding of the regulations. This knowledge gap can be partially attributed to the fact that these properties are in a forest regeneration mode and therefore forest management activities such as road building and timber harvesting are minimal at this time.

Overall, operational practices were noted to be consistent with the intent of the legislation and the owners' management commitments

2. Management Commitments

A management commitment is a legal requirement before a piece of land is admitted to the Managed Forest program and is intended to reflect the owner's objectives for managing the property. Overall the management commitments were found to be a good representation of the state of the managed forests and the management opportunities present on the land. The forest practices observed generally reflect the management commitments objectives and strategies. Minor revisions to update the management strategies were recommended to some owners.

3. Reforestation

All owners were found to be reforesting harvested areas within two years of harvesting. Plantations and naturally regenerated areas were found to be well stocked and growing well. A mixture of commercial species in the reforested areas was observed. The most notable threat (and expense) to establishing successful vigorous regeneration was found to be browsing of young seedlings by ungulates, i.e. black-tailed deer and elk. This was observed to be a significant issue for properties on the Gulf Islands and parts of Vancouver Island. Notwithstanding this, all coastal owners who plant trees are aware of the browsing problem and install browse protection covers in plantations at risk. There is a considerable expense with such protective measures, which places a significant cost against the business of growing and harvesting timber throughout the entire tree growing rotation.

The inspection team consistently found that previously harvested lands, consisting in some cases of the entire properties, have been reforested since the last harvest and that the owners are managing these mainly immature stands that will not produce merchantable timber for many years.

4. Marketability of small harvest volumes

Although all types of owners, active or less active, are affected by rising forest management costs and falling log markets, it was noted that less active owners who only harvest timber periodically more acutely experience logging cost and marketing challenges due to low harvest volumes and remote locations. This is particularly the case for smaller properties on the Gulf Islands. Access to open and competitive log markets and cooperative harvesting and marketing of their logs were suggested as possible solutions. Many of the owners are keen to explore opportunities for diversifying their businesses by potentially marketing a broader spectrum of non-timber forest products such as floral greens and specialty forest products.

Conclusion

The inspectors observed the enthusiasm with which all owners showcased their Managed Forests and the range of attributes present – healthy forest stands, riparian habitat, water quality and wildlife presence. It was the opinion of the inspectors that all owners visited want to do a good job of managing their forest land and enhancing the productivity and value of their forest assets.

The 2007 to 2008 Managed Forest site inspection program consistently found that the owners are managing their properties in accordance with their management commitments and regulatory requirements of the Private Managed Forest Land Act. No potential contraventions of the regulations were observed during the inspections.



Christmas tree plot



Lumber cut from MF at portable mill



2007 road construction



Second growth coastal stand