



Report from Executive Director Gord Chipman (Winter 2024)

Overview of Governance

The past few months have been focused on getting momentum on the transitional Task List and to keep working on operational issues. Work has occurred on operational policies such as the Accounts Payable and the Travel Expense Policy. These policies have been approved by the WPDC Board and we are currently working on more policies such as the Authorities document.

Funding

The funding programs of the Forest Investment Program, Forest Enhancement Society and the Grant from the BC Wildfire Service have all made progress. We received approval to plant on 6 woodlots this spring. Normally this does not happen until the trees are loaded in a truck and on the way to the site. So progress has been made.

Conferences and Meetings

Travel to the Forest Professional BC conference in Kelowna, To the Boundary Woodlot Association meeting in Christina Lake and to the Southern Interior Silviculture conference in Kamloops. During this time I have been moving files from the Winfield locker to store at the Williams Lake location. The plan is to have all files in place by mid March.

COFI Survey

We participated in a survey with COFI that was conducted by David Elstone. The objective of the survey was to identify the logjams that are occurring in the Forestry Permitting process. What is working is where relationships are positive then permitting occurs. The survey identified what is not working is that Practice of Professional forestry being overruled by non professionals, permits for salvage take too long, information sharing is dysfunctional, cutting permit process is not consistent between the 23 Forest districts, there is a Shortage of experienced staff at the MOF for leadership and capacity within each district is missing. A very complex situation that causes all the uncertainty.

Bill 28 and Woodlot Takebacks

A recommendation report was created for the Bill 28 compensation regulations was published

in the Weekly Emails and in the Winter edition of the Almanac. Negotiations with the 10 woodlots at risk have been moving along. In the Peace River there have been discussions with the five woodlots there along with representatives from MIRR and MOF. On a similar note the legal challenges in the Blueberry are getting more complicated because the Halfway River FN and the Doig River FN are suing the provincial government over the Blueberry compensation.

On the Coast recent discussions occurred there regarding their woodlots. It has been reported that 3 woodlots that are going down the compensation path. There are 2 woodlots that are working on replacement areas.

Policy

The Provincial Forestry Forum has not met since December when we discussed the salvage process and the Roadmap of Forestry. We as part of a subgroup met recently to discuss the state of the policy world and all are frustrated with the lack of policy transparency. Other than some vague intentions from the government we do not have a list of proposed legislation that is intended to go through parliament by Mid May. We hope to get more results on this in the coming weeks. The reversal of direction of the Land Act highlights the current lack of transparency.

Meet with Forest Minister Ralston

Through the Boundary Woodlot Association, George Delisle WL 411 organized a meeting with the Minister of Forests. Myself and Tyler Hodgkinson attended virtually. It all started with Rolly Russell inviting the Minister to view the Kalesnikoff sawmill with a side tour of George's woodlot. That field tour did not occur so it resulted in a 30 minute Virtual discussion with the Minister about how George's woodlot has been managed for the past 30 years. The Minister committed to viewing the woodlot in the future.

Allowable Annual Cuts

A disturbing trend has happened in 2023. Last year the provincial government eliminated the Unduly Clause. This was a rule that any land use decisions could not impact the Allowable Annual cut, however with this clause eliminated we are seeing the results of the tenure uncertainty. It is reported that the provincial cut was 33 million on an AAC of 60 million. Woodlots delivered 887,905 m3 in 2023 on an AAC of 1.4 million.

Year	Harvested Volume on Woodlots
2016	1,610,071
2017	1,940,852

2018	2,020,167
2019	1,656,015
2020	1,195,592
2021	1,641,984
2022	1,618,397
2023	887,905

Going forward the province has budgeted 32 million per year of provincial timber harvesting. It could be argued that the woodlot harvest in 2023 could be due to past salvage operations and haphazard log markets. However, the log values in the province have ranged between \$100 to \$160 in the interior and 30% higher on the coast. The log jam of permit approvals has a spot light on it right now, I expect there will be some improvement. As long as sawmills stay open I think the harvest level will be higher than 1 million m3 for 2024.

Operational Reports from Regional Representatives

North Region Update - By Melissa Steidle

Skeena Ecosystems

Sent an email to the Moose GAR order inbox to confirm receipt of comments. Chris responded that they had received our letter. There is a gap in staffing coverage on this file and therefore the submission had not been acknowledged.

They will be addressing the concerns in our letter and hope to have a new proposal for our review in the coming months.

Resilient Sustainable Old Forest Committee

Identified a list of comments for the response to the Biodiversity and Healthy Ecosystems Framework. The committee is also gathering information on old forests and identifying old growth groups in their areas. The next meeting is being arranged for early March.

Forest Investment Program

Working through questions on submissions. Some of the districts are in contact with me to review projects. We are identifying projects with a high likelihood of approval in order to begin developing FN consultation packages. Projects are not yet approved by the FIP group.

Commercial Thinning Manual

Mike Trepanier at IFS is putting the final touches on the Commercial Thinning for Woodlots Manual. I ran through a last round of edits on the document. It is put together to discuss Commercial Thinning for the average non-forester woodlot license. It gives a good description of what licensees need to do to be assured of a good treatment outcome. It goes through some terminology and had graphs to help licensees identify when a stand is ready for treatment.

Spruce Beetle Project Focus Group

Preparing for the Spruce Beetle Project Focus Group by requesting feedback from licensees in the north. I've gotten a significant number of submissions identifying different experiences when trying to treat stands with Spruce Bark Beetle.

South Region Update - By Tyler Hodgkinson

Waste and Residue

Work in process of compiling survey data received from 26 woodlots and analyzing trends. The question at hand is whether to conduct individual surveys or calculate district averages. Additionally, there is a need to address the issue of partial cutting, as the current survey policy is punitive.

In March, once the waste data is compiled, and recommendations are made, I plan to launch a volunteer Waste Committee. Its primary purpose is to provide strategic guidance on the provincial forest residue and waste policy specific to woodlot tenure. The committee will assess current waste management practices, identify areas for improvement, and develop strategies to reduce logging residue costs. Moreover, it aims to refine waste measurement procedures, ultimately reducing overall waste in woodlot tenure.

Wildfire Risk Reduction and Wildfire Management

There are currently three approved FES projects in progress near Williams Lake. Among these projects, one of the larger initiatives, the W1579 landscape-level break, has been put out to bid. We plan to select the successful contractor on March 20th.

Assisted W0588 to put together another FES application that will be submitted sometime in March.

In February, we launched an internal Wildfire Committee dedicated to improving wildfire response and communication. We are actively working on refining the terms of reference, incorporating participants' views, and ensuring a balanced approach.

Ktunaxa Forestry Standards Committee

I will be following our committee's strategy and action plan to assess the applicability of Ktunaxa forestry standards to woodlot tenures. These standards, imposed without a Government-to-Government landscape-level process, hold the potential to significantly impact the economic viability of our woodlots, marking a substantial shift in our management rights.

They introduce unnecessary referrals that duplicate elements already covered in the Woodlot Licence Plan, leading to considerable delays. Furthermore, these standards include professional aspects beyond scope and practices, lacking professional endorsement. At this point, more questions than answers arise.

Forest Investment Program

I have been actively assisting Samantha with the Forest Improvement Program applications in the South Region.

Forest Practices Board Retrospective

I have finalized a paper analyzing the Forest Practice Board audit, complaint, and special investigation reports from the last 10 years. The objective of this report is to provide an analytical review, emphasizing the findings and areas within the Forest and Range Practices Act and Wildfire Act that woodlot holders should focus on for improvement. The paper was sent to Daryl Spencer, the FPB auditor, for final comments. This was made available to members in March.

Forest Minister Meeting

In February, the BWA executive had a brief meeting with Minister Ralston, where we used the opportunity to pique the Minister's interest in attending a field tour of W0411 this year. We hope to showcase how many of the forest attributes the public wants to be protected can be preserved through collaboration with logging. We aim to have the Minister tour W0411 this field season, allowing for in-depth conversations on forestry and the woodlot program's path forward.

For example, we briefly discussed how the caretaker of W0411 has developed a forest stand that meets many of the objectives we aspire to see on our landscapes today. While this style of forest management may not be applicable everywhere, where it can be implemented, it proves highly effective. W0411 boasts a forest that is more resilient to climate change, has reduced fuel loading, and incurs no cost to the taxpayer, all while increasing the value of the forest stand for both timber and wildlife.

We also addressed how the current uncertainty intensifies risks, impacting forest investment and stewardship. We expressed our anticipation of collaborating with the BC Wildfire Service on innovative ideas to reduce wildfire risks around our communities and within Woodlots. Additionally, we mentioned our eagerness to work with the Honorable Andrew Mercier in his role as Minister of State for Sustainable Forestry Innovation. Regarding consultation, we believe there is a genuine opportunity to reduce workloads for both the government and First Nations by collaboratively eliminating the repetition of referring the same woodlot area. This issue needs to be addressed between First Nations and the Government, as Woodlots often find themselves caught in the middle.

A memo covering uncertainty, innovation/intensive forest management, wildfire management, landscape-level planning, and First Nations consultation was also sent to the Minister.

Forest Professionals BC AGM and Conference

I attended the FPBC conference with Gord and we managed the FBCWA booth, forging connections on behalf of our organization.

Coast Region Update – By Ed Hughes and Mike Larock

The Coast Region woodlot team worked on the following in the month of February 2024.

Continued communication with woodlot holders (updating contact information, top 5 concerns, Role of Woodlots BC, engagement with government and others, specific projects underway provincially, etc)

Contribute input to the various government initiatives.

We plan to support a request from the Southern Island Woodlot Association to address some politics with the Cowichan Regional District.

Assist WL with their applications for funding under the Forest Investment Program. The program contains priorities and criteria for the distribution of the investment.

Participate in the Operations Issues Forum for the Coast Region on Feb 29 2024. A government led group that discusses issues affecting the operations of forest tenure holders in the region. Communicating changes in the reorganization of government ministries.

What meetings have been attended?

Timber Pricing Committee started Feb 18, 2024, Coastal Market Pricing System Advisory Committee, Operations Issues Forum-Coast Region, Forest Investment Program, North Island Woodlot Assoc Meeting, Contractor calls, COFI project.

What issues should be examined in the next month?

- The Proposed changes to the Land Act have been delayed. What other Acts could be changed to accommodate DRIPA, Heritage Conservation, or Water Act?
- Implementation of FRPA changes resulting from Bil 28
- Continue to monitor Timber pricing and TAB rate.

What is working?

Continuing the communication with licensees. The goal is to speak to all the coastal licensees about their woodlots, their concerns and questions. And to update them on the changes within our organization.

Regional Reps collaborate and stay informed on issues of concern across the province.