

Gordon Cosens Forest

2010- 2016

Management Unit Action Plan

Status Report

Gordon Cosens Forest 2016 Independent Forest Audit Status Report Signature Page

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Gordon Cosens Forest 2010-2016 Independent Forest Audit

Action Plan Approval Signature Page

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Introduction

An Independent Forest Audit (IFA) of the Gordon Cosens Forest was conducted by Arbex Forest Resource Consultants Ltd. during 2016. The Audit scope included the 6 years of operations from April 1, 2010 through March 31, 2016.

The Audit Action Plan was approved by the Regional Director on February 27, 2017 and documented planned actions to resolve 5 recommendations which were made in the Audit Report.

In November 2017 Rayonier Advanced Materials acquired Tembec. As a result, the Gordon Cosens Forest is now managed by Rayonier AM Canada GP (RYAM) under Sustainable Forest License (SFL) # 550039.

Submission of this Status Report by the Hearst District Manager is due February 27, 2019.

Recommendations

Recommendation #3:

Tembec must implement appropriate remedial silviculture interventions within poorly stocked plantations (as required) and enhance its monitoring program on artificial renewal sites with an emphasis on areas renewed since 2012.

Action Required:

1. Tembec will ensure areas artificially regenerated between 2012 and 2016 are surveyed, starting summer 2017.
2. Tembec will use the information collected to 1) identify areas that require additional treatments and 2) look for trends which might explain the poor stocking results.
3. Tembec will re-treat areas identified as requiring additional treatments.
4. Tembec and MNRF District staff will jointly look at Tembec's existing regeneration monitoring plan, revise as required and continue to implement the monitoring plan going forward.

Progress to Date:

1. RYAM (formerly Tembec) entered into a 3-year contract with Sumac Geomatics Incorporated ('Sumac') on April 18th, 2017 to carry out regeneration condition surveys on all areas planted as part of the 2012-2016 planting programs on the Gordon Cosens Forest ('GCF'). To-date 6,652 ha have been reassessed, with the remaining 3,564 ha scheduled for reassessment during the 2019 season (65% completed). Please note that a small portion of the hectares being reassessed represent areas located on the RYAM Freehold property.
2. Areas for Retreatment and Review of Trends to Determine Poor Stocking Results
 - a. Areas for Retreatment:
 - i. 2017 Planting Season: Blocks G157 (75 ha / 105,459 trees) and G158 (47 ha / 36,756 trees) fill planted spring 2017. These areas had been identified by RYAM staff prior to surveys being carried out by Sumac.
 - ii. 2018 Planting Season: Block G144 (325 ha / 344,038 trees) was fill planted spring 2018. Blocks G153, G150 and G193 (combined 83.4 ha / 86,650 trees) were identified for re-treatment but were not treated due to a shortfall in trees. These areas will be carried forward to the 2020 planting season and combined with the renewal of areas to be harvested summer/winter of 2019.
 - iii. 2019 Planting Season: Portions of blocks G098, G041, G096, G097, G097_P, G125 and all of block G136 have been included as part of the 2019 spring program (combined represents 223.6 ha / 179,900 trees).
 - b. Review of Trends to Determine the Poor Stocking Results:
 - i. A review of the 2017 and 2018 survey information has not resulted in the determination of a single cause for the poor stocking results.

Rather, the poor results are due to several variables, each of which may have contributed partly or entirely to the poor outplant performance. These variables include the following: 1) extremes in weather (both drought conditions and flooding following planting have been noted during the 2012-2016 planting seasons), 2) poor stock handling by planters (e.g., damage caused when separating seedlings, leaving caches improperly tarped, trees un-tarped during transport by tree deliverers), 3) movement to a 'large' tree as part of our herbicide reduction initiative, which has resulted in a taller / slimmer tree than traditionally planted on the GCF, 4) an increased presence in grass, particularly in sites that have been mechanically site prepared, resulting in snow press and decreased seedling survival (works in combination with item # 3) and 5) improperly working on-site cold storage facilities (i.e., reefers – experienced both frozen stock and overheated / dry stock as the result of incorrectly functioning reefers), resulting in stressed stock that is more susceptible to the variables previously mentioned. It has also been noted that the start of the tree planting program on the GCF has been trending later into the month of May (third to fourth week) when compared to historic start dates (typically mid-May). Despite the delayed start date (i.e., late arrival of spring) the on-set of summer conditions does not appear to have been impacted. It is possible that the reduced amount of time between spring and summer conditions may negatively impact seedling survival as the tree seedlings have less time to establish themselves prior to the start of summer conditions when compared to historical programs (less root establishment rendering the tree more prone to drought conditions).

3. See summary of activities outlined above (section 2a).
4. No progress made to date. Awaiting completion of the 2019 field assessment by SUMAC so that a joint meeting between RYAM and MNRF can occur.

Future Tracking Requirements:

1. Confirm completion of third year of assessments by SUMAC in 2019.
2. Review/update assessment trends (based on 2019 surveys).
3. Confirm area of retreatment for 2020 outplant.
4. Confirm that monitoring plan has been updated.

Recommendation #4:

The MNRF Hearst District Manager must ensure that Annual Compliance Operations Plans (ACOP) are prepared.

Action Required:

1. Ensure that the development of the ACOP is included in the Targets and Commitments of the Resources Management Supervisors and Resources Operations Supervisor; and included in the Personal Development Plans (PDP) of the Integrated Resource Management Senior Technical Specialists (IRM) and other appropriate staff.
2. To have an approved ACOP in place before the start of each fiscal year.

Progress to Date:

1. The lead for development of ACOPs was assigned to the Resource Management Supervisor in Kapuskasing, and development of the ACOP has been included as a performance commitment in his Performance Development Plan every year since 2015-16. Checks of PDPs for other positions such as IRM, Aggregate Technical Specialist, and Forestry Technical Specialist also indicate the inclusion of commitments to support the development of the ACOP..
2. Annual Compliance Operating Plans were developed and approved for each of the years 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. These plans were not in place for the start of each fiscal year (i.e., April 1st), but records indicate approval dates ranging from June to October.

Future Tracking Requirements:

1. The assignment of targets for the development of ACOPs are completed as part of performance management planning discussions. Assigned targets can be tracked by checking the PDPs of appropriate staff. This will continue in future.
2. Copies of approved ACOPs are filed on a shared drive. In future, approval dates will be indicated on the plan for easier and more accurate tracking of approval dates.

Recommendation #5:

The Hearst District must extend its delivery of the Silviculture Effectiveness Monitoring (SEM) Program to include all Core Task requirements.

Action Required:

1. The Hearst District to organize and implement a field program consistent with Northeast Regional direction on a yearly basis and incorporate District priorities as required.
2. The results of the District SEM program will be reported back to the Northeast Region following the completion of the field season.

Progress to Date:

1. The Kapuskasing Field Office is following the prioritized direction of the Core Tasks provided on an annual basis from the NE Region.

For the 2017 field season, the Core Task 1 - 10 percent check of areas declared Free-To-Grow was identified as a high priority for completion by all District Offices. A check of recent or current silviculture operations (Core Task 3) was identified as a moderate priority, and the 5 percent check of 5-year post Free-To-Grow (Core Task 2) was identified as a low priority. The field season accomplished a 7.8 percent check of 1,213 ha targeted for verification of areas declared Free-To-Grow (Core Task 1) and checked recent silvicultural activities including natural and artificial regeneration and tending areas totaling 470 hectares (Core Task 3).

For the 2018 field season, the Core Task 1 – 10 percent check of areas declared Free-To-Grow was identified as a high priority for completion by all District Offices. Core Task 2 is a check of recent or current silviculture operations. And Core Task 3 is for special projects. The field season accomplished 5 percent check of 1,586 ha targeted for verification of areas declared Free-To-Grow, and checked recent silvicultural activities that were all artificial regeneration with the SFL totaling 1143 hectares.

2. The Kapuskasing Field Office has reported its SEM program results to the NE Region annually and on time, as outlined in the yearly SEM Direction. Emails are kept on file to record submission.

Future Tracking Requirements:

1. The Kapuskasing Field Office will continue to follow NE Region direction and prioritize workload accordingly. For the 2020 field season on the Gordon Cosens Forest, the new SEI direction will be applied for the first time. Staff in the Kapuskasing Field Office as keeping abreast of these new changes through the FMP planning process as well as through the implementation of the FMP Plans implementing SEI in 2019 field season.
2. The Kapuskasing Field Office will continue to keep records demonstrating when the SEM Field program data has been submitted.

Recommendation #7:

To provide a reliable assessment of the free-to-grow condition, the District MNRF and Tembec must jointly implement sampling and data compilation procedure(s) for FTG surveys and Core Task 1 SEM monitoring that resolve data discrepancies and variability.

Action Required:

1. A joint session between Tembec and MNRF staff to create consistency in evaluating how we measure and report on the following:
 - Species composition string;
 - Forest Unit;
 - Polygon area; and,
 - Residual trees.
2. MNRF to provide SEM survey results to Tembec annually.
3. Tembec to use SEM data to calibrate their aerial survey crews with MNRF ground data.
4. MNRF and Tembec to jointly review the SEM results and AR data to discuss discrepancies.

Progress to Date:

1. Joint discussions between RYAM and MNRF have occurred on multiple occasions to better align the processes used by RYAM and MNRF.
2. MNRF has provided SEM survey results to Rayonier AM Canada GP on an annual basis in the form of either a full report or an excel spreadsheet.
3. RYAM staff involved with the FTG program have reviewed the information and have used to information to calibrate ground calls (specifically species composition, stocking and height).
4. MNRF and RYAM jointly discussed the SEM results during the development of the Year 7 AR. Additionally, MNRF provided RYAM with a summary of SEM results which were incorporated into the development of the post-renewal succession rulesets and the silvicultural ground rules for the 2020 FMP.

Future Tracking Requirements:

1. Ensure joint discussions continue as required.
2. Ensure MNRF provides SEM results for 2019.
3. Ensure RYAM staff review, and refer to, SEM information for the 2019 FTG program.
4. Ensure SEM results are discussed during the development of the remaining Ars to be completed for the 2010 FMP.

Recommendation #8:

Tembec must ensure that Annual Reports meet the FMPM submission schedule and improve the quality of its initial Annual Report and Annual Work Schedule submissions.

Action Required:

1. Tembec to ensure staff resources are prioritized such that draft and final AWS and Annual Reports are submitted as per FMPM submission schedule.
2. Tembec to ensure internal reviews of draft AWS and AR submissions are completed prior to draft submission.
3. Tembec to provide reasonable annual opportunities to MNR District staff to review key information pieces (i.e. maps) prior to draft submission of AWS and AR submission packages.

Progress to Date:

1. All AWS and AR submissions (draft and final) since 2016 have been submitted on or before the submission schedule outlined in the FMPM.
2. Internal reviews of draft AWS and AR submissions have been completed to ensure completeness and quality. The number and nature of required alterations for the draft AWS and AR submissions demonstrates that the draft submissions were complete and of good quality.
3. Opportunities have been provided to MNR District staff to review each AWS and AR draft submission since 2016. The number and nature of required alterations for the draft AWS and AR submissions demonstrate that the submissions were complete and good quality.

Future Tracking Requirements:

1. Continue to document AWS and AR submissions for the 2010 FMP through the FI Portal.
2. Continue to ensure internal reviews of AWS and AR draft submissions for the 2010 FMP occur.
3. Continue to ensure opportunities are provided to MNR District staff to review draft AWS and AR submissions occur.