

Independent Forest Audit Provincial Action Plan 2015

**Dog River-Matawin Forest (2010-2015)
English River Forest (2010-2015)
Kenogami Forest (2010-2015)
Red Lake Forest (2010-2015)
Trout Lake Forest (2009-2015)
Wabigoon Forest (2010-2015)**

Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry



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Introduction

Independent Forest Audits (IFAs) were conducted on the following six Forest Management Units (FMUs) in Ontario in 2015, for the years described:

- **Dog River-Matawin Forest (April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2015)**
- **English River Forest (April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2015)**
- **Kenogami Forest (April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2015)**
- **Red Lake Forest (April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2015)**
- **Trout Lake Forest (April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2015)**
- **Wabigoon Forest (April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2015)**

The audits were undertaken according to the Independent Forest Audit Process and Protocol (IFAPP) which meets the requirements of the Crown Forest Sustainability Act (CFSA) and the conditions of MNR's Class Environmental Assessment for Forest Management in Ontario (2003) as amended. It also meets the requirements of Ontario Regulation 160/04 made under the CFSA (governing Independent Forest Audits).

This action plan was developed based on the requirements of the IFAPP (2015). The action plan addresses the sixteen (16) 2015 IFA recommendations directed to corporate and regional Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF). Sustainable Forest Licence (SFL) extension recommendations are provided at the end of the action plan.

Provincial action plans must be submitted annually for MNRF approval within two months of receipt of the last final audit report for the year, unless otherwise directed by the Minister. For 2015 audits, the last final audit report for the year was accepted by the Forestry Futures Trust Committee on April 11, 2016. Although the provincial action plan was due in 2016, the efforts outlined in this action plan were underway and the Ministry was responding in a practical way to the recommendations provided by auditors immediately following the submission of the audit reports.

The approved provincial action plan will be made available through the Ontario government website once the audit reports are tabled in the Legislature.

The progress towards implementing this action plan will be reported in a separate status report submitted two years following approval of the action plan.

Recommendations

Principle 2: Public Consultation and Aboriginal Involvement

Trout Lake Forest Recommendation #2:

Corporate MNRF shall consult with the Métis Nation of Ontario regarding the asserted Métis rights on the Trout Lake Forest and attempt to reach a common understanding regarding those rights.

Action Required:

Action has been completed. MNRF is committed to building a strong relationship with the Métis Nation of Ontario and ensuring that rights bearing Métis communities are respected. Recently, Ontario and the Métis Nation of Ontario collaborated on the identification of six historic Métis communities in Ontario. One of the communities identified is the Rainy River/Lake of the Woods Historic Métis Community. MNRF is working directly with the Métis Nation of Ontario to develop mechanisms that will enhance participation by Métis rights bearing communities in forest management planning. This participation will provide MNRF with a better understanding of the nature, location, and extent of asserted Métis rights and lead to better decision making, respect and protection of these asserted rights.

Organization and Position Responsible:

MNRF, Northwest Regional Resources Manager

No Future Tracking Required

Principle 3: Forest Management Planning

English River Forest Recommendation #2:

Corporate MNRF shall provide financial compensation to the SFL holder and additional staff and budget resources to the MNRF District and Region in the event the late delivery of the FRI delays the preparation of the 2019-2029 forest management plan to a point that necessitates the preparation of a contingency plan or plan extension.

Action Required:

1. No Action Required. The English River Forest FRI was delivered November 2015 as scheduled; as of November 2017, the SFL holder has not submitted a proposal for a plan extension or a contingency plan.
2. If a Contingency Plan or Extension is proposed by the SFL, adequate resources to support the planning requirements will be made available to the MNRF District & Region.

Organization and Position Responsible:

1. MNRF Provincial Services Division, Natural Resources Information Section, Manager
2. MNRF Regional Operations Division, Northwest Regional Resources Supervisor.

Deadline Date:

1. Complete at time of action plan preparation.
2. Ongoing

Method of Tracking Progress:

1. None required.
2. Submission of Proposal for a Plan Extension or Contingency Plan.

Dog River-Matawin Forest Recommendation #1:

The Forest Resources Inventory Unit must ensure the timely delivery of FRI products in order to facilitate the incorporation of more current forest resource information in forest management plans.

Action Required:

Complete. According to the Forest Management Planning Schedule, the Dog River-Matawin FRI was to be delivered on December 15, 2015. The Dog-River-Matawin FRI was delivered on October 26, 2015.

Organization and Position Responsible:

MNRF, Provincial Services Division, Natural Resources Information Section
Manager

No Future Tracking Required

Kenogami Forest Recommendation #1:

The MNRF Region must ensure that the FMP Steering Committee meets its obligations and responsibilities to provide guidance and direction to the FMP Planning Team to ensure that the FMP is produced and approved on time.

Action Required:

1. A steering committee will be formed which will include the District Manager, SFL Holder (or a Senior member of the Plan Author's company in the case of a Crown unit) and Regional Forest Resources Planning Supervisor and be included in the Phase 2 2016 Kenogami FMP Terms of Reference. Together the committee will meet to provide direction or solutions for planning team issues identified by the planning team.
2. An MNRF representative will document minutes and any action items resulting from steering committee meetings that occur during the development of the phase 2 Kenogami FMP. The Draft Minutes/Action Items will be distributed amongst the Steering Committee members for review and acceptance. The

decisions as well as action items will be communicated to the planning team through the project manager in a timely manner and any action items will be assigned to the appropriate task team. Should a task team not exist the Project Manager and Plan author will form an appropriate task team to ensure the steering committee decision or action item is addressed.

Progress to Date:

1. Complete. A steering committee was established and in place for the Phase II 2011-2021 Kenogami Forest Management Plan. The list of Steering Committee members is documented in the MNRF Regional Director approved Terms of Reference for the 2011- 2021 Phase II plan and is available on the eFMP website.
2. Complete. No planning team decisions/action items, as a result of planning team meetings, required Steering Committee intervention, therefore no steering committee meeting minutes or decisions are on record.

No Future Tracking Required

Kenogami Forest Recommendation #2:

The MNRF Natural Resource Information Section (Forest Resources Inventory Unit) must meet planned timelines for the delivery of the Forest Resource Inventory and ensure the quality of the inventory products.

Action Required:

1. The Kenogami Forest was on track to produce a 2010 Forest Management Plan (FMP). A one-year contingency plan (CP) was developed to enable the planning team to utilise a newer 2005 vintage Forest Resources Inventory (FRI). A 2011 Kenogami FMP was produced using the new 2005 FRI.
2. Phase II of that plan was completed for 2016. The next plan will be a 2021 - 2031 FMP. A new FRI-will not be fully delivered ahead of the upcoming FMP schedule. As products from the FRI production process, such as, aerial imagery and LiDAR become available they will be utilized to the full extent possible to inform operational decisions as the plan will be built on a 2005 FRI.

Organization and Position Responsible:

1. MNRF, Provincial Services Division, Natural Resources Information Section Manager
2. MNRF, Provincial Services Division, Natural Resources Information Section Manager

Deadline Date:

1. Complete
2. Aerial imagery and LiDAR acquisition commenced during the summer of 2018 and is planned for completion during the summer of 2019. Aerial imagery and LiDAR products should be available upon processing in the fall of 2019.

Method of Tracking Progress:

1. None required.
2. Bi-monthly update for MNRF representatives and forest industry partners.

Principle 4: Plan Assessment and Implementation

English River Forest Recommendation #4:

Regional MNRF staff shall provide guidance to District MNRF staff on the "sign off" process for completion/approval of harvest block road rehabilitation efforts by Resolute Forest Products.

Action Required:

No action required. Regional staff are now involved directly in FMP planning and reporting and are providing the necessary guidance when road use management strategies are being developed.

Organization and Position Responsible:

MNRF, Regional Operations Division, Northwest Regional Planning Unit Supervisor.

No Future Tracking Required

English River Forest Recommendation #5:

Regional MNRF staff should provide clear criteria and expected outcomes for decommissioning and reclaiming of roads.

Action Required:

1. Regional staff are now involved directly in FMP planning and reporting and are providing the necessary guidance to increase clarity and consistency in Road Use Management Strategies (RUMS).
2. The MNRF Regional Planning Unit Supervisor will form a task team to review current RUMS and develop a suite of new Road Use Management Strategies that are consistent across the region and address specific criteria and expected outcomes for decommissioning and reclaiming of roads.

Organization and Position Responsible:

1. MNRF, Regional Operations Division, Northwest Regional Planning Unit Supervisor.

2. MNRF, Regional Operations Division, Northwest Regional Planning Unit Supervisor.

Deadline Date:

1. Complete at time of action plan preparation.
2. 2023 and ongoing.

Method of Tracking Progress:

1. None required.
2. Completion and distribution of implementation bulletin.

English River Forest Recommendation #6:

Regional MNRF shall provide MNRF District with interim direction on the criteria to be used for closure of an “A” caribou block.

Action Required:

Regional staff are now involved directly in FMP planning and are providing the necessary guidance for the identification of factors for consideration when closing caribou “A” blocks.

Organization and Position Responsible:

MNRF, Regional Operations Division, Northwest Regional Planning Unit Supervisor.

Deadline Date:

Ongoing.

Method of Tracking Progress:

Approved English River Forest Management Plan.

English River Forest Recommendation #8:

Corporate MNRF should provide a glossary of commonly used words and phrases, including operational terms, related to decommissioning or reclamation of roads and linear features.

Action Required:

Complete at time of action plan preparation.

The Forest Management Planning Manual (FMPM), 2009 contains a glossary which included the term Decommissioning. The FMPM, 2017 also includes a glossary in which the term Decommissioning was updated to provide further clarity regarding the required physical activity to be completed to decommission forest access roads (e.g., site preparation and regeneration, removal of water crossing(s)). The FMPM, 2017 only refers to road construction and decommissioning. The FMPM, 2017 does not refer to terms such as rehabilitated, reclaimed, retired, or restored in relation to forest access roads, therefore, these terms were not included in the Glossary. No further action required.

Organization and Position Responsible:

MNRF, Policy Division, Crown Forests and Lands Policy Branch, Forest Legislation and Planning Section Manager

No Future Tracking Required

Trout Lake Forest Recommendation #8:

Corporate MNRF shall explore the value of engaging in a broader modeling exercise during forest management planning that includes scenarios based on maximum possible harvest rates, recent historic rates, and probable future rates to strengthen the basis for identifying objectives and planning for the future forest.

Action Required:

Complete at time of action plan preparation.

This recommendation was addressed by revisions made to the Forest Management Planning Manual (FMPM). The 2017 FMPM includes a requirement to conduct a risk assessment during the preparation of the long-term management direction. When identifying risks the planning team will consider access limitations, recommendations identified in independent forest audits, and the year five management unit annual report. The risk assessment will include an investigation of recent wood utilization and an evaluation of the potential implications on the achievement of management objectives.

Organization and Position Responsible:

MNRF, Policy Division, Crown Forests and Lands Policy Branch, Forest Legislation and Planning Section Manager

No Future Tracking Required

Principle 5: System Support

Trout Lake Forest Recommendation #10:

Corporate MNRF shall strongly consider retaining an active role in assisting MNRF Districts and companies in training compliance inspectors.

Action Required:

MNRF's responsibilities with respect to the provincial forest compliance program rests with the Regional Operations Division, specifically with Integration Branch in consultation with the Regional offices.

1. On an annual basis, in order to achieve a higher forest compliance examination success rate, Integration Branch will ensure MNRF districts and companies are aware of the pre-requisites needed prior to taking the forest compliance certification field exam.

2. MNRF Integration Branch will consider input from the regions as to the forest compliance training needs of district and/or company staff and will work with the regions to deliver pertinent training.

Organization and Position Responsible:

1. and 2. MNRF, Regional Operations Division, Integration Branch, Program Coordination Section Manager

Deadline Date:

1. Annually
2. Fall, 2019

Method of Tracking Progress:

1. and 2. Documented correspondence electronically filed within Integration Branch

Principle 6: Monitoring

Dog River-Matawin Forest Recommendation #3:

The Crown Forests and Lands Policy Branch should evaluate the adoption of broadly defined forest type groups for the reporting of silviculture success.

Action Required:

Complete. Forest Health & Silviculture Section (FHSS) has commenced a Silviculture Enhancement Initiative (SEI) with the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of renewal and maintenance efforts and making improvements where required. Through this initiative FHSS will review its direction for Silviculture Effectiveness Monitoring (SEM) Free-to-Grow (FTG) assessments including the sequencing of FTG reporting in Annual Reports.

In 2017 the Forest Management Planning Manual (FMPM), Forest Information Manual (FIM) and the Forest Operations and Silviculture Manual (FOSM) were revised to incorporate the direction of the Minister's decisions made in the SEI. This includes the reporting of regeneration status according to the forest types defined in the forest management plan.

Organization and Position Responsible:

MNRF, Policy Division, Crown Forests and Lands Policy Branch, Forest Guides and Silviculture Section Manager

No Future Tracking Required

Red Lake Forest Recommendation #17:

Regional or Corporate MNRF compliance staff shall work with all certified RLFMC and District MNRF compliance inspectors active on the RLF to review Procedure 07 03 05 in

the Forest Compliance Handbook, particularly the sections dealing with non-compliance identification and the operational issue management process, to ensure that the intent of the system is clearly understood and applied appropriately by industry and MNR compliance inspectors on the Red Lake Forest.

Action Required:

A Northwest regional forest compliance committee (NWFCC) has been formed to assist in the delivery of the Ministry's Forestry Compliance Program in the Northwest by sharing information and expertise, liaising with other Branches/Divisions and industry on forestry compliance matters. The committee's mandate is intended to provide advice, information, leadership and direction to Districts, the Regional Director, and Integration Branch on forestry compliance matters. One of the purposes of the committee is to identify the need for workshops, district visits or other compliance training needs from the field. The committee will assess and work with all certified RLFMC and District MNR compliance inspectors active on the RLF to insure the intent of the forest compliance handbook is being met and any gaps in training are addressed.

Organization and Position Responsible:

MNR, Regional Operations Division, Northwest Regional Operations Specialist.

Deadline Date:

Ongoing.

Method of Tracking Progress:

NWFCC meeting minutes, records of training material reviewed, participation at future meeting/ knowledge transfer sessions.

Trout Lake Forest Recommendation #13:

Until appropriate standards, field methods and corresponding technical specifications for silvicultural effectiveness monitoring are developed, Corporate MNR shall provide support to Red Lake District to ensure that an appropriate program for silvicultural effectiveness monitoring is implemented for the Trout Lake Forest.

Action Required:

1. The Northwest Regional office will develop and deliver annually direction for District SEM programs until ROD implementation direction is completed for the Silviculture Enhancement Initiative. This will include direction on setting targets and appropriate methodologies to use when reviewing the SFLs Annual Report's renewal results (i.e FTG).
2. The Regional Office will provide training to the District office on assessment methodologies and data gathering software and hardware.

Organization and Position Responsible:

1. MNR, Regional Operations Division, Northwest Regional Operations Specialist.

2. MNRF, Regional Operations Division, Northwest Regional Forested Ecosystems Science Specialists

Deadline Date:

1. Ongoing
2. Ongoing

Method of Tracking Progress:

1. Annual SEM Program Priorities and Result Summary document
2. Training records

Principle 8: Contractual Obligations

English River Recommendation #10:

Corporate MNRF must either extend Sustainable Forest License #542454 or notify the license holder of the reasons why the license is not being extended.

Action Required:

No action required. The licence was extended to March 31, 2033 in January of 2018.

No Future Tracking Required

Other (outside of Principles 1-8):

Trout Lake Forest Recommendation #7:

The Forest Industry Division of MNRF and Domtar shall seek to increase the use of wood from the Trout Lake Forest, including making unused wood available to users who have not been traditional users of wood from the Forest.

Action Required:

Timber Allocation and Licensing Section will continue to report on wood supply opportunities for all forests, including the Trout Lake Forest, via public facing Available Wood Reports. To ensure the report is accurately reflecting available supplies on the Trout Lake Forest, MNRF will complete a Wood Utilization Review in accordance with Forest Management Directives and Procedures FOR 03 01 19, Monitoring the Use of Crown Wood Supply. Results of this review, if applicable, will be reflected in future Available Wood Reports.

Organization and Position Responsible:

MNRF, Forest Industry Division, Operations Branch, Timber Allocation and Licensing Section Manager

Deadline Date:

March 31, 2019

Method of Tracking Progress:

Review completed and Available Wood Report updated

SFL Licences

Licence Extension

This section describes the licence extension recommendations made by the applicable auditors in 2015. The Kenogami Forest is managed by the Crown and is therefore not included in the list below.

English River Forest Recommendation on Licence Extension

The audit team concludes that management of the English River Forest was generally in compliance with the legislation, regulations and policies that were in effect during the term covered by the audit, and the English River Forest was managed in compliance with the terms and conditions of the Sustainable Forest License held by Resolute Forest Products. Forest sustainability is being achieved, as assessed through the Independent Forest Audit Process and Protocol. The audit team recommends the Minister extend the term of Sustainable Forest License #542454 for a further five years.

Dog River-Matawin Forest Recommendation on Licence Extension

The audit team concludes that management of the Dog River-Matawin Forest was generally in compliance with the legislation, regulations and policies that were in effect during the term covered by the audit, and the Forest was managed in compliance with the terms and conditions of the Sustainable Forest Licence held by Resolute FP Canada Inc. Forest sustainability is being achieved, as assessed through the Independent Forest Audit Process and Protocol. The audit team recommends the Minister extend the term of the Sustainable Forest Licence # 542459 for a further five years.

Wabigoon Forest Recommendation on Licence Extension

The audit team concluded that forest sustainability as assessed through the 2015 Independent Forest Audit Process and Protocol is being achieved. The audit team recommends the Minister extend the term of the Sustainable Forest Licence # 541953 for a further five years.

Red Lake Forest Recommendation on Licence Extension

The audit team recommends the Minister extend the term of Sustainable Forest Licence 542548 for a further five years, only upon confirmation that the following two conditions have been satisfied: a) RLFMC shall develop a more robust and integrated information management system, paying particular attention to the aspects of document control, filing systems, organizing field notes, maintaining records, and developing procedures for storing back-ups off-site and performing quality control checks on mapped information; and b) the Company shall revise its business plan, for the acceptance of MNRF, to demonstrate the continued viability of the RLFMC and its ability to fully meet the obligations and responsibilities as an SFL-holder.

Trout Lake Forest Recommendation on Licence Extension

The audit team concludes that management of the Trout Lake Forest was generally in compliance with the legislation, regulations and policies that were in effect during the term covered by the audit, and the Forest was managed in compliance with the terms and Sustainable Forest Licence held by Domtar Inc. Forest sustainability is being achieved, as assessed through the Independent Forest Audit Process and Protocol. The audit team recommends the Minister extend the term of Sustainable Forest Licence 542461 for a further five years.

Licence review

MNRF will undertake a review of the Sustainable Forest Licences (SFLs) to ensure the terms and conditions of the licence have been achieved by the licensee. The following outlines the planned details of this review program.
2015 SFL Licence Reviews

Actions:

1. A review of the applicable SFLs for the above forests will be conducted to ensure the licensees have complied with the terms and conditions of the licence. As part of the review, IFA recommendations will be considered in accordance with Section 9 of the SFL.
2. Results of the reviews will be evaluated and if satisfactory, will be advanced to the Minister for his/her consideration.

Organization & position responsible:

1. & 2. MNRF, Forest Industry Division, Operations Branch, Timber Allocation and Licensing Section Manager.

Deadline date:

1. English River: Review complete. The licence was extended to March 31, 2033 in January of 2018.

2. Dog River – Matawin: Review complete. A recommendation on licence extension will be advanced for the Minister’s consideration after Lieutenant Governor in Council approves. Indigenous consultation on the extension decision has been completed.
3. Wabigoon: Review complete. A recommendation on licence extension will be advanced for the Minister’s consideration after Indigenous consultation has been completed and the Lieutenant Governor in Council approves.
4. Red Lake: Review Complete. The licence was extended to March 31, 2033 in October of 2016.
5. Trout Lake: Review complete. A recommendation on licence extension will be advanced for the Minister’s consideration after Lieutenant Governor in Council approves. Indigenous consultation on the extension decision has been completed.

Method of tracking progress:

Review completed. Briefing material forwarded to the Minister if review satisfactory.