

Hearst Forest
Independent Forest Audit
2012 - 2019
Management Unit Action Plan

Hearst Forest 2019 Independent Forest Audit

Action Plan Submission Signature Page

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Action Plan Approval Signature Page

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Introduction

The purpose of this action plan is to address the findings of the 2019 Independent Forest Audit (IFA) of the Hearst Forest conducted by Arbex Forest Resource Consultants Ltd. The audit utilized a risk-based approach based on the 2019 Independent Forest Audit Process and Protocol (IFAPP).

The audit term was from April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2019. The audit scope covers the implementation of Phase II of the 2007-2017 Forest Management Plan (years 6, 7, 8, 9, 10), the development and implementation (years 1, 2) of the 2017-2019 Contingency Plan and the development of 2019-2029 Forest Management Plan.

The Hearst Forest is managed by Hearst Forest Management Inc. under Sustainable Forest License (SFL) # 550053. The company operates under the terms of a partnership agreement between Lecours Lumber Co. Ltd., Columbia Forest Products and Tembec Industries Inc. (now Rayonier Advanced Materials Canada G.P.) The Forest is situated within the MNRF Hearst District in the Northeast Region.

The audit team concluded that management of the Hearst 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 # 550053.

The 2019 Independent Forest Audit Final Report for the Hearst Forest was accepted by the Forestry Futures Trust Committee on November 7, 2019. This report contains five findings, and all are addressed within this action plan.

Findings

Finding #1:

- a) The implementation of the planning process strained relations amongst planning team members and resulted in frustration, communications breakdowns and a dysfunctional working environment.
- b) The 2017 Forest Management Plan Steering Committee and senior managers from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and Hearst Forest Management Inc. were not successful in resolving issues and disagreements among planning team members.
- c) There was a lack of training and understanding of the Woodstock model and the interpretation of the model outputs.

Action Required:

1. Schedule a session to plan for the 2017-2019 Contingency Plan and 2019-2029 Hearst Forest Management Plan debrief.
2. Hold the debrief session which includes the root cause analysis for the development of the joint lessons learned.
3. In the development of the 2029-39 Forest Management Plan, once a model is chosen, adequate training will be provided to Planning Team members.

Organization and Position Responsible:

1. Hearst District Manager, MNRF
2. Hearst Forest Management Inc, General Manager
3. Northeast Regional Planning Supervisor, MNRF

Deadline Date:

1. April 31, 2020: establish the team and necessary action plan for the debrief.
2. May 31, 2020: develop lesson learned structure and format.
3. September 30, 2020: Final debrief exercise template, list of participants and schedule.
4. December 2026: Start up of 2029 Hearst Forest Management Plan until end of invitation to participate (Stage one)

Method of Tracking Progress:

1. List of names of organizers.
2. Debrief exercise structure and format document.
3. Debrief exercise template and schedule document.
4. Tracking methods: 2029 Terms of Reference and Project Plan

Finding #2:

The slash management program requires improvement and monitoring.

Action Required:

1. Consistently report total area treated for slash management by treatment type in the Annual Report.
2. Measure effectiveness in monitoring and management using a combination of remote sensing and onsite observations and measurements to determine what proportion of various types of land (road, ditch, slash) are expected to be lost to forest production.
3. In addition to current efforts, explore operational methodologies to reduce land occupied by slash.

Organization and Position Responsible:

1. Planning Forester, Hearst Forest Management Inc.

2. Management Forester, Hearst District, MNRF
3. Regional Planning Forester, MNRF

Deadline Date:

1. Reporting will be completed annually as required in the annual report.
2. Monitoring and calibration of the classification will be sampled on a 2-year basis to inform a comprehensive review in the Annual Reports as per the applicable Forest Management Planning Manual (2022, 2024, 2026).
3. Ongoing – reported as part of Quarterly meetings.

Method of Tracking Progress:

1. Confirmation of reported slash management in the Annual Report.
2. Confirmation of incremental data collection year 2, year 4 and completion of comprehensive review to be conducted in 2026-2027.
3. Quarterly meeting notes.

Finding #3:

Timely and effective tending treatments are not consistently implemented.

Action Required:

1. In collaboration with affected First Nation communities, increase educational efforts and engagement in a culturally sensitive manner.
2. Review alternative competition control treatments which may be more compatible with First Nation's expectations, and evaluate treatment outcomes, as well as their effectiveness.
3. Strive for timely tending herbicide treatments.

Organization and Position Responsible:

1. Resource Liaison, MNRF
2. Hearst Forest Management Inc, supporting staff
3. Management Forester, Hearst District, MNRF
4. Regional Forest Ecosystem Science Specialists, MNRF

Deadline Date:

1. Annually, ongoing.

Method of Tracking Progress:

1. Record of communications.
2. Annual Report.

3. A longer-term evaluation of effectiveness will be carried out through the Silvicultural Enhancement Initiative Process.

Finding #4:

The lack of a shared understanding and interpretation of water crossing requirements between Hearst Forest Management Inc. and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry Hearst District Office continues to interfere with the effective implementation of the Forest Management Plan.

Action Required:

1. Develop a local issue resolution process.
2. Jointly generated list of concerns or outstanding questions in the interpretation of guidelines/policies and implementation of final decisions.
 - a. Establish a working committee to address listed concerns and address any outstanding questions.
3. Joint field outings for better policy and process alignment.

Organization and Position Responsible:

1. District Manager, Hearst District, MNRF
2. General Manager, Hearst Forest Management Inc.
3. SFL and District technical staff

Deadline Date:

1. June 30, 2020
2. November 30, 2020
3. December 31, 2020

Method of Tracking Progress:

1. Issue Resolution Document.
2. Email confirmation and record of field outing.
3. Committee meeting notes.

Finding #5:

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry Northeast Regional Office and the Hearst District Office did not fully meet Silviculture Effectiveness Monitoring program direction on the Hearst Forest.

Action Required:

1. The MNRF Northeast Region (NER) will ensure the Silvicultural Effectiveness Monitoring (SEM) and Silvicultural Enhancement Initiative (SEI) program direction and strategy are:

- Consistent with the Forest Management Planning Manual
 - Clarify compulsory requirements and optional activities
 - Outline methodology and procedures for each activity
 - Provide direction on information exchange, reporting templates and due dates
2. The NER will lead an annual SEM/SEI meeting with NER Districts. The purpose will be to:
 - Discuss current policy direction as it relates to the Provincial SEM/SEI Program
 - Discuss the previous year SEM/SEI program and results, including Regional trend analysis of the districts data.
 - Discuss the upcoming/current year SEM/SEI program including Regional contacts, activities, any changes in direction, training needs, budgets, software and technology updates.
 3. MNRF Hearst District will plan and implement an SEM/SEI program following the NER SEM/SEI direction and as per Hearst Forest Management Plan 2019-2029. The iSTARS program is the present ground survey method approved for auditing regeneration assessment results in the MNRF Northeast Region.
 4. MNRF Hearst District and Hearst Forest Management Inc. staff will meet to discuss SEM/SEI results at a mutually agreed time period.

Organization and Position Responsible:

1. Northeast Region Forest Operations Specialist, MNRF
2. Regional Forest Ecosystem Science Specialists, MNRF
3. Northeast Region Forest Operations Specialist, MNRF
4. Management Forester, MNRF
5. Integrated Resource Management Technical Specialist, MNRF
6. Resources Management Technicians, MNRF
7. Planning or Silviculture Forester, Hearst Forest Management Inc.

Deadline Date:

1. April 1, 2020 and annually thereafter as required
2. May 30, 2020 and annually thereafter each spring
3. Fiscal year 2020-2021 and annually thereafter
4. April 1, 2020 and annually thereafter each spring

Method of Tracking Progress:

1. Copy of the updated program direction document and annual updates' copies of communication (emails) of the documents to District staff
2. Meeting invitation, minutes, recording, or notes
3. District SEM/SEI Work Plan document, planning files (maps and data, staff scheduler), survey result files (data and analysis, information exchange communications), District SEM/SEI Annual Report document
4. Meeting minutes or notes
5. A summary table shall record all activities related to the yearly District SEM/SEI Work Plan.