

Abitibi River Forest
Independent Forest Audit
April 1, 2010 – March 31, 2017
Management Unit Status Report

Abitibi River Forest 2017 Independent Forest Audit

Status Report Submission Signature Page

Prepared By:

____ Etienne Green _____

Date: __ June 22, 2021 ____

Etienne Green, R.P.F.
Planning Forester
ARFMI



____ Erin Armstrong, R.P.F. _____
A/Regional Planning Forester
MNRF, Northeast Region

Date: __ June 14, 2021 ____

Reviewed By:

Allan Foley

June 24, 2021

Date: _____

Allan Foley R.P.F.
A/General Manager
ARFMI

Krista Mayrand

June 23, 2021

Date: _____

Krista Mayrand, R.P.F.
Management Forester
MNRF, Cochrane District

Kelly Ellis

Date: __ June 24, 2021 ____

____ Kelly Ellis, R.P.F. _____
A/Resource Planning Unit Supervisor
MNRF, Northeast Region

Submitted By:

___Al Winters_____

Date:___2021/06/23_____

Al Winters
District Manager
MNRF, Cochrane District

Abitibi River Forest 2017 Independent Forest Audit Status Report Approval Signature Page

Approved By:

Michael Gluck

2021/06/25

Date: _____

Michael Gluck
Regional Director
MNRF, Northwest Region

Introduction

An Independent Forest Audit (IFA) of the Abitibi River Forest was conducted by KBM Resources Group in the month of October 2017. The audit scope included the 7 years of operations from April 1, 2010 through March 31, 2017.

The Abitibi River Forest SFL # 551832 is managed by Abitibi River Forest Management Inc (ARFMI). Administration of the forest by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR) is led by the Cochrane District Office, with shared responsibilities from Timmins and Kirkland Lake District Offices. As well, the Regional Operations Division in the Northeast Regional Office has administrative responsibilities including the administration of the Forest Management Plan and the Independent Forest Audit.

The IFA Report was accepted by the Forestry Futures Committee on March 7, 2018 and provided to ARFMI, MNR Cochrane District and Northeast Region on March 12, 2018. The report contained 5 findings, including 1 which was directed to corporate MNR, and 4 which were directed to either district MNR or ARFMI. The Action Plan was approved by MNR on January 29, 2019

The Independent Forest Audit Process and Protocol (2020) directs that a Status Report is to be submitted by the MNR District Manager within two years of the approval of the Action Plan, unless otherwise directed by the Minister. The due date for this report is January 29, 2021, however; as a result of changes in MNR staffing the Status Report did not transition to the appropriate file lead until January 2021 at which point there was not enough time to complete the approval process for the required due date.

Findings

Finding #1:

IEA decision timelines for Phase II are significantly longer than prescribed by the FMPM. These cause delays in operations, unnecessarily angsts in participants, and increase administrative costs for forest managers.

Action Required:

1. This finding was deemed the responsibility of Corporate MNR. The action will specify that corporate or policy level findings will be considered as part of the regular corporate work planning and policy review cycle. IEA decisions are the responsibility of MECP and not the MNR. Due to this, MNR has little influence on timelines of decision making by another Ministry. All best efforts are made to encourage MECP to make timely decisions by senior MNR staff when necessary.

Organization and Position Responsible:

1. Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry

Deadline Date:

1. N/A

Method of Tracking Progress:

1. N/A

Status of Action Required: N/A

No changes to the status of this finding as described above under Action Required.

Finding #2:

The renewal support section lacked the mandatory requirements of the FMPM for including a FMU-level strategy for the long-term use of improved seed on the forest.

Action Required:

1. ARFMI to review its current use of improved seed on the forest and create a long term FMU-level strategy and amend a draft strategy into the current FMP.

Organization and Position Responsible:

1. Abitibi River Forest Management Inc. – Plan Author

Deadline Date:

1. September 30, 2019 for existing FMP amendment to include strategy text.

Method of Tracking Progress:

1. Approved amendment to the 2012 FMP

Status of Action Required: Delayed

An amendment describing an FMU-level strategy for the long-term use of improved seed was submitted to MNRF Cochrane District by January 30, 2020. The amendment reflects the approved FMP analysis package information and modeling as well as recent strategic direction from the Northeast Seed Management Association (NeSMA). In addition, the recently updated MNRF seed-movement policy was referenced. The amendment was approved by the MNRF August 28, 2020.

Finding #3:

No progress has been made in experimental testing to determine inexpensive yet effective ways to rehabilitate roads back to the natural state as soon as possible after the cessation of forest operations, as outlined in the 2012-2022 FMP (Supplemental Documentation, ARFMI Implementation Toolkit).

Action Required:

1. MNRF and ARFMI will work together to find at least one site where an experimental decommissioning approach can be tested.
2. ARFMI will create a road decommissioning plan that will include the experimental decommissioning site(s). The decommissioning plan will include all roads and crossings that will be decommissioned, during the year, as well as the specific techniques and the results expected for the experimental test area(s) to help to determine inexpensive yet effective ways of rehabilitating roads back to a natural state as soon as possible. This decommissioning plan will be incorporated or revised into the AWS.
3. Following any experimental tests, ARFMI and MNRF staff will have a joint inspection of the site(s).
4. Results will be reported in the Annual Report and through regularly required FOIP reports.

Organization and Position Responsible:

1. ARFMI – Plan Author & MNRF Management Forester & Biologist
2. ARFMI – Plan Author, with MNRF Biologist input
3. ARFMI - Plan Author & operations staff and MNRF Management Forester and Biologist
4. ARFMI – Compliance Inspectors and Plan Author

Deadline Date:

1. To be included in each AWS. For the 2019 -2020 AWS the decommissioning plan must be revised into the AWS prior to June 1, 2019.
2. Inspections must take place while work is being completed or immediately after.
3. To be included in the Annual Report, on or before November 15 of every year.

Method of Tracking Progress:

1. Annual Work Schedule
2. FOIP Reports
3. Annual Report

Status of Action Required: Ongoing

Initial plans identified Harvest Block Freele 120 to be the first harvest block with a full decommissioning plan however there were remaining operations to be completed. The Plan Author contacted the District Management Biologist to resume previous discussions on the decommissioning plan for this harvest block. In addition to addressing access management, the decommissioning plan was to include provisions to address the “insurance policy” requirements of the Caribou Conservation Plan, or any subsequent legislative or policy direction. i.e. harvest and regeneration as well as road decommissioning. The June 1, 2019 deadline date addressed an MNRF concern of receiving a timely decommissioning plan should the Freele 120 block be decommissioned in that AWS period. The block was not completed; therefore, no plan has been submitted.

Cochrane District and representatives from ARFMI began discussions May 2021, to form exit strategies for the A-blocks in the Dynamic Caribou Habitat Schedule (DCHS) to be incorporated in the 2022-2032 Forest Management Plan currently at Stage 3-Proposed Operations. These exit strategies will describe roads for decommissioning (both SFL and MNRF), level of residual left in the block and the status of regeneration with the overall intent being to decrease the level of disturbance in the A-block expressed as a per centage. The SFL has identified a pilot project opportunity in Seguin Township to investigate decommissioning methods. The results of this pilot project will help to inform how roads in the Abitibi River Forest Management Unit are reclaimed for Caribou habitat.

New Deadline dates: Decommissioning strategies will be included in the 2022 FMP as well as the Annual Work Schedules prepared under the new FMP. Changes to the strategies will be submitted to the MNRF through the regulatory process of amendments and AWS changes prior to implementation.

Finding #4:

The total area of declared natural renewal is not being amended to account for changes to the renewal prescriptions in the Trends Analysis Report.

Action Required:

1. SFL to continue to track changes in renewal prescriptions (Forest Operations Prescription (FOP)) on areas previously declared as natural renewal via the ARFMI GIS-based silvicultural tracking system.
2. SFL will report these Silvicultural Ground Rule (SGR) changes in each Annual Report through the updated Silvicultural Ground Rule Update Layer.
3. For reporting in the Year 5 and Final Year Annual Reports (Trends Analysis), the SFL will conduct a spatial analysis of regeneration treatments to ensure that

subsequent updates to previous natural regeneration prescriptions are reflected and to ensure that renewal area is not double-counted,

Organization and Position Responsible:

1. ARFMI – Plan Author
2. ARFMI – Plan Author
3. ARFMI – Plan Author

Deadline Date:

1. November 15th annually.
2. November 15th annually.
3. Year 5 and Final Year Annual Reports.

Method of Tracking Progress:

1. ARFMI GIS-based silvicultural tracking system.
2. FIM SGR Update Layer
3. 2022 IFA Trends Analysis

Status of Action Required: Ongoing

ARFMI continues to track changes in renewal prescriptions (Forest Operations Prescription (FOP)) on areas previously declared as natural renewal via the ARFMI GIS-based silvicultural tracking system and reports on these Silvicultural Ground Rule (SGR) changes in each Annual Report through the updated Silvicultural Ground Rule Update Layer.

The Year-7 AR (submitted November, 2019) reflects the changes made to previously declared natural renewal prescriptions. Any outstanding concerns identified during the MNRF review will be addressed in the final AR submission.

The deadline date for action 3 needs to be updated to reflect that the Annual Report requirements follow the 2009 FMPM as per the 2017 FMPM phase-in provisions under which the ARF Phase II plan was written. The Year 7 AR is enhanced, not the Year 5. The Method of tracking for action 3 also need updating to be consistent with changes made to the Independent Forest Audit Process and Protocol and the audit selection criteria which no longer an IFA Trend Analysis requirement and which makes the audit year unknown at this time.

Finding #5:

Annual Reports and the Trends Analysis Report were deficient in describing analyses, trends and implications for operations and future plans. A harvest profile that varies significantly from the planned profile requires careful consideration in developing the next plan.

Action Required:

1. 2022 FMP Planning Team will complete a review of the Annual Reports and Trend Analysis. All significant variation from the planned harvest profile, as identified in Section 1.2.5.2 of the 2017 FMPM (Risk Assessment), will be considered and documented during the development of the 2022 Long-Term Management Direction
2. As per the 2017 FMPM, Year 5 and Final Year Annual Reports will contain detailed assessment, analysis and review of the trends, including the implications for operations.
3. Annual Reports to include discussion on the progress of meeting FMP Targets and the implications to date of actual achievement levels, including any proposed adjustments.

Organization and Position Responsible:

1. Planning Team for the 2022 Abitibi River FMP
2. Abitibi River Forest Management Inc. – Plan Author
3. Abitibi River Forest Management Inc. - Plan Author

Deadline Date:

1. Two months prior to the submission of the LTMD for the 2022 FMP or as determined in the approved planning schedule
2. Year 5 AR (Trends Analysis for the 2022 IFA)
3. November 15, 2019

Method of Tracking Progress:

1. 2022 Planning Team meeting minutes and Approved Analysis Package and LTMD for the 2022 FMP
2. Year 5 AR (Trends Analysis for the 2022 IFA)
3. Annual Reports – starting with the 2018-19 period.

Status of Action Required: Ongoing

The 2022 LTMD received preliminary endorsement on April 21st, 2021. The planning team has completed a review of past annual reports and trend analyses and used this information during the development of the LTMD.

During the LTMD development process the planning team investigated what the forest is capable of producing when the recent utilisation (both area and volume based) is prescribed in the strategic model. The findings are contained in the Analysis package submitted in the LTMD.

Following the LTMD development, the Plan Author included a Risk Assessment that examined the sensitivity of recent harvest utilisation on the achievement of management objectives. The risk assessment investigation included eight separate

strategic model runs that modified the LTMD model by reducing the harvest volumes down to the recent utilisation levels.

The results indicate that the forest is capable of staying above the minimum interquartile range for all the area based short- and medium-term Boreal Landscape Guide indicators, and all but two long term indicators. The Immature and Older Hardwood and Immature Mixedwood and the Pine Conifer could not maintain the same trend as the LTMD because less area can create these conditions.

The Year 7 AR was submitted for MNR review and approval on February 14th, 2020 and was published on March 1st, 2020. The Year 7 AR has been prepared according to part E of the 2017 FMPM, which indicates that the additional requirements applicable to the Year 5 AR are required to the extent reasonably possible. This includes the completion of a trends analysis.