

Bancroft-Minden Forest

2017 IFA

Status Report

Bancroft-Minden Forest 2017 Independent Forest Audit

Status Report Signature Page

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Introduction

In November 2017 an Independent Forest Audit (IFA) was conducted on the Bancroft-Minden Forest for the period April 1, 2011, to March 31, 2017. Integration Branch was notified of the Forestry Futures Committee's acceptance of the report as being final on March 7, 2018. A Management Unit Action Plan was approved June 18, 2018.

This Status Report describes the status of the actions detailed in the 2018 Bancroft-Minden Forest IFA Action Plan. The status report includes the original approved actions for findings from the Management Unit Action Plan. The progress to date is listed below the actions required. Future tracking is shown for any actions not yet completed. In keeping with the 2017 Action Plan, this status report addresses the status of the 5 management unit findings only. The other 3 findings are addressed separately through regular corporate MNRFP planning and policy review cycle. The Status Report is due June 18, 2020. Finding 3, 7 and 8 were deemed to be Corporate MNRFP responsibility and therefore not included in this Status Report.

Findings

Finding #1:

District Condition 34/56 reports and surveys are lacking in detailed information that would support a conclusive assessment of efforts to identify and provide opportunities to Indigenous communities over the audit term.

Action Required:

This is no longer a requirement in the 2017 FMPM (Pg. ii, Line 38-39). In response to the Declaration Order MNR-75: Environmental Assessment Requirements for Forest Management on Crown Lands in Ontario, MNRFP Bancroft District will:

1. Request BMFC provide input into the Condition 34/56 report
2. Ensure Condition 34/56 report contents meet MNRFP requirements.
3. Ensure MNRFP staff responsible for completing the report are trained.
4. MNRFP Bancroft District Manager and BMFC General Manager will continue to have ongoing discussions with Indigenous communities in the Forest Management Unit.

Progress to Date:

1. Complete. After the completion of the 2013-2018 Five Year Environmental Assessment (EA) Report (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/five-year-environmental-assessment-report-forest-management-2013-2018>) Policy Division no longer surveyed districts on Condition 56 with the knowledge that an exemption for forestry activities from the EA Act was being sought by MECP.

2. Complete. Reports were completed for 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 fiscal years which contributed to the provincial 5-year EA report. A MNRF Condition 56 task team was assembled in spring of 2018 to address challenges with implementation and reporting. The output of this team was in part, to provide a reporting mechanism that could be more effectively completed. The task team was put on hold when MECP sought an exemption from the *Environmental Assessment Act* for forestry activities.
3. Complete. A Condition 56 information session hosted by Policy Divisions was attended by MNRF District and Regional staff. An MNRF Condition 56 task team was assembled in spring of 2018 to address challenges with implementation and reporting. The output of this team was in part, to provide training on Condition 56 as well as EA reporting requirements. The task team was put on hold when MECP sought an exemption from the EA Act for forestry activities.
4. Complete: Note that Condition 56 was intended to provide economic opportunities to First Nation and Métis communities.

The Bancroft District Manager and SFL General Manager will implement direction flowing from the Ontario's Forest Sector Strategy (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontarios-forest-sector-strategy>) to provide economic opportunities to Indigenous communities.

Future Tracking Requirements:

1. 2,3,4: None. Effective July 1, 2020 forest management activities are exempt from the *Environmental Assessment Act*. Declaration Order MNR-75 which contains Condition 56 is no longer in effect. Future economic opportunities in forestry for First Nation and Métis groups will be pursued through Ontario's Forest Sector Strategy. Specific details are yet to be determined.

Finding #2:

A Report on the Protection of Identified Aboriginal Values for Curve Lake First Nation is outstanding.

Action Required:

1. The Bancroft District Manager will ensure the planning requirements for the 2017 FMPM are adhered to by the 2021 FMP planning team.
2. The Bancroft District Manager will ensure the position of the District Resources Liaison Specialist is filled to promote understanding, co-operation and participation in MNRF's sustainable resource management programs with Indigenous people, non-Indigenous communities and other resource management users.

Progress to Date:

1. Complete

2. On-going. Position has been previously posted by the MNRF District Manager, failed to recruit people interested moving to the Bancroft Area.

Future Tracking Requirements:

1. None: The District Manager will ensure that the Report on the Protection of Identified First Nation and Métis Values is produced and updated as required by FMPM.
2. On-going. Responsibility: MNRF District Manager. Deadline: N/A Method of Tracking: RLS position filled.

Finding #4:

Better communication between MNRF and BMFC would allow for more efficient use of MNRFs limited resources and provide the MNRF with the opportunity to focus values collection efforts where they are most essential.

Action Required:

1. Database identifying operating blocks in 2011 FMP has been created and will continue to be updated, maintained and shared with both organizations with forest values information.
2. Creation of an FMP habitat layer to capture SAR habitat information will be developed, maintained and shared with both organizations.
3. Provide BMFC with training on values collection and verification as needed.
4. Develop prescriptions for recreational values as deemed necessary by 2021 FMP planning team.
5. Encourage ongoing dialogue between organizations related to forest values.

Progress to Date:

1. Partially complete. A spreadsheet identifying the status of operational planning (prescription development, tree marking, harvest) and values collection (surveys conducted and priorities remaining) was created jointly by SFL and MNRF. Spreadsheet was not being fully utilized and modification will need to be made to make it more effective and efficient.
2. Complete. An FMP habitat layer was created and maintained locally by the MNRF. This layer has been replaced by wildlife activity layers provincially maintained in LIO.
3. On-going. Verification of values has occurred through joint site visits with MNRF and SFL staff. The pandemic has made these joint visits difficult but will be a focus moving forward. Next Steps – schedule regular meetings and communications. Training on values collection with SFL staff not complete.
4. Partially Complete. An operational prescription was developed for Provincial Parks for the 2021 FMP. Some existing prescriptions for recreational values (cross-country ski trails) were carried forward from 2011 FMP. Camping program run by the Water Trails program administered by Algonquin Highlands township will need specific AOC's for their program.

5. Ongoing - Meetings have been scheduled to address this issue. MNRF shares FMP values information with the SFL through AWS comments (potential for new values in blocks), values updates (spatial data for new values), and spreadsheet (surveys conducted and remaining priority surveys). It is identified that the SFL would like a speedy response to values discoveries including when no values are found on a block so operations can commence with confidence. Informal communication is encouraged to remove any communication barriers (e.g. text, phone call or email). The formal spreadsheet (see point 1) is intended to be in place soon to be updated for permanent record. It is also the intention of both SFL and MNRF staff to communicate if they have questions related to the survey status of a block (including likelihood of new values being found) or known values (e.g. operational requirements and/or application of flexibility provisions).

Future Tracking Requirements:

1. Partially Complete. Responsibility: MNRF Management Biologist and SFL Senior Operations Technician. Deadline Date: June 2021. Method of Tracking: Finalized Spreadsheet and Ledger.
2. Complete. No future tracking required.
3. Ongoing. Responsibility: SFL staff and MNRF Management Biologist. Deadline date: to be completed during 2021 field season as opportunity allows. Will depend on current COVID situation and practicality to meet face to face.
4. Partially Complete. Responsibility: MNRF Management Forester and SFL Senior Operations Technician to work with the manager of the Water Trails Program during Draft Plan review to create AOC's specific to the Water Trails Program. Deadline: July 2021 Method of Tracking: Approved 2021-2031 FMP
5. Ongoing. Responsibility: MNRF Management Biologist and SFL Senior Operations Technician begin regular meetings in April 2021. Deadline and Method of Tracking: Effectiveness of this approach should be deduced by August 2021 as values are collected and operations occur.

Finding #5:

Evidence of poor operating practices was found on 4 of the 22 blocks sampled.

Action Required:

1. Review and adjust training needs on a more regular basis for operators and contractors to respond to emerging trends and changes.
2. More thorough documentation of unusual circumstances in FOIP reports.
3. Joint inspections with district compliance staff will be initiated.

Progress to Date:

1. Complete. BMFC Spring Operator training was conducted May 7th, 2018 and is now planned annually. MNRF staff will be invited to provide updates and give presentations as needed.
2. Complete: BMFC technicians have been more diligent at documentation of unusual circumstances in FOIP reports.
3. Complete - 2 Joint inspections with SFL/MNRF occurred in 2017, 2019 and 2020.

Future Tracking Requirements:

1. None. Has become part of future business.
2. None. Records kept in FOIP reporting.
3. None: Objective is to increase joint inspections. Average has been 0 to 2 over the last 5 years. Will target at least 2 joint inspections each year. Record will be kept in FOIP reporting as a Joint MNRF/SFL audit. Will need to consider COVID restrictions moving forward.

Finding #6:

The number of MNRF compliance inspections fell below planned levels on a consistent basis throughout the term of the audit.

Action Required:

1. Ensure staff are trained and available to conduct inspections and prepare FOIP reports
2. Increase number of certified compliance inspectors in the district.
3. Ensure MNRF Bancroft District risk-based approach to forest compliance is consistent with the 2014 forest compliance handbook.

Progress to Date:

1. Complete. See #2. District is setting priorities for compliance monitoring.
2. Complete. 1 new technician certified in 2018. 1 new employee hired in 2020 is certified. There are currently 5 compliance inspectors.
3. Complete. The district has put more emphasis on the use of a risk-based approach for their annual compliance operating plan. Annual Compliance Operating Plan will continue to focus on risk-based approach.

Future Tracking Requirements:

1. None. MNRF is revamping the forest compliance system and hopefully this will make it easier to get people certified. Continue to put an emphasis on mentoring.
2. None.
3. None.