

Independent Forest Audit

Provincial Action Plan

2014

Big Pic Forest (2009-2014)

Caribou Forest (2009-2014)

Lakehead Forest (2009-2014)

Whiskey Jack Forest (2009-2014)

White River Forest (2008-2014)

Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry



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2014 Provincial Action Plan Endorsement Signature Page

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Introduction

Independent Forest Audits (IFAs) were conducted on the following five Forest Management Units (FMUs) in Ontario in 2014, for the years described:

- Big Pic Forest (April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2014)
- Caribou Forest (April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2014)
- Lakehead Forest (April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2014)
- Whiskey Jack Forest (April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2014)
- White River Forest (April 1, 2008 to March 31, 2014)

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 (2014). The action plan addresses the 2014 IFA recommendations directed to MNRF corporate and regional. 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 2014 audits, the last final audit report for the year was accepted by the Forestry Futures Committee on May 25, 2015. Although the provincial action plan should have been submitted in 2015, 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 government's public 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 #1: Commitment

White River Forest Recommendation #5:

Regional MNRF must ensure Wawa District maintains a staffing level that enables fulfillment of their operational and regulatory mandate.

Action(s):

1. The MNRF District Manager will work with the Region, Regional Director, Resources Manager and Planning Supervisor to develop sound and timely solutions to ensure responsibilities for management of the forest are maintained.
2. Wawa District will adjust the annual workload priorities for District staff to meet their forest management responsibilities and obligations.

Organization and position responsible:

1. MNRF, Regional Operations Division, Wawa District Manager and Northeast Regional Director
2. MNRF, Regional Operations Division, Wawa District Manager and District Management and Operations Supervisors

Deadline date:

1. The Wawa District Leadership Team will develop a solution within 30 days of a position becoming vacant.
2. The workload priorities will be adjusted as required in the annual District work planning process and identified in individual staff performance plans starting in 2017 and ongoing annually thereafter.

Method of tracking progress:

1. Human resources employee files
2. Annual Wawa District Work Plan and Wawa Annual Compliance Operations Plan

Principle 2: Public Consultation and Aboriginal Involvement

Caribou Forest Recommendation #4:

Corporate MNRF shall examine its EBR procedures for reviewing, approving, and posting EBR notices that publicize FMP public consultation opportunities, with the intent of streamlining the process to avoid unnecessary delays.

Action(s):

In 2012, MNRF prepared a summary of the processes and timelines involved in order to have FMP Environmental Registry Information Notices posted. In January 2013, the key

timelines related to these Environmental Registry postings were incorporated into the FMP Project Plan template. Beginning in 2012 and 2013 respectively, these materials have been provided to planning teams, including by MNRF Forests Branch as part of Provincial FMP training at the applicable stages of FMP plan production. These materials have successfully assisted Planning Teams in meeting the Environmental Registry posting timelines. The FMP Environmental Registry Information Notice posting process and FMP Project Plan template will continue to be reviewed annually during Provincial FMP training and these materials will continue to be updated for any process changes.

Organization and position responsible:

MNRF, Regional Operations Division, Integration Branch, Program Coordination Section, Sr. Program Advisor - Forestry

Deadline date:

Complete at time of action plan preparation

Method of tracking progress:

N/A

Principle 3: Forest Management Planning

Big Pic Recommendation #1:

Corporate MNRF must redouble its efforts to work towards the timely delivery of FRI products to enable the inclusion of the best available forest inventory information in forest management plans.

Action(s):

Include a stocking attribute for forested stands.

Imagery acquisition, calibration plot and photo interpretation phases are all complete for the Big Pic Forest Resources Inventory (FRI). Historic silvicultural information and other supplementary data that was included as part of the photo interpretation phase has been reviewed based on forest management planning experiences from other forests. Single line water features have been added into the Big Pic FRI. A stocking value for forested stands is being included to augment the crown closure attribute that was required at the time of production.

Organization and position responsible:

MNRF, Provincial Services Division, Science and Research Branch, Natural Resources Information Section, Forest Resources Inventory Unit Coordinator

Deadline date:

Complete at time of action plan preparation. Task Complete September 2015.

Method of tracking progress:

The action required to add stocking into the Big Pic FRI will be included in bi-weekly FRI production meetings.

Whiskey Jack Forest Recommendation #2:

Corporate MNRF should redouble efforts to work towards the timely delivery of FRI products to facilitate the incorporation of more current forest resource information in forest management plans.

Action(s):

Based on the monitoring of production schedules and deliverables outlined in the Statement of Work for Ontario Forest Resources Inventory Field Sampling and Air Photo Interpretation for the Whiskey Jack Forest, production is on schedule.

During design and establishment of the Enhanced Forest Resources Inventory (FRI), the Provincial Forest Inventory Advisory Committee recommended imagery for the 555,000 sq km project area should be acquired during the first five years of the project so all Sustainable Forest Licensees (SFL) could gain immediate benefit from the new program. Imagery for the Whiskey Jack Forest was completed in 2009 and 2010. Calibration plot establishment and photo interpretation phases of production commenced for the Whiskey Jack FRI in 2015 with completion of those phases scheduled for May of 2017. Historic silvicultural information and other supplementary data is being included as part of the photo interpretation phase.

Organization and position responsible:

MNRF, Provincial Services Division, Science and Research Branch, Natural Resources Information Section, Forest Resources Inventory Unit Coordinator

Deadline date:

Complete at time of action plan preparation. Task Complete May 2017.

Method of tracking progress:

Monthly auditing of calibration plots and photo interpretation for the Whiskey Jack Forest FRI supported by monthly production meetings and regular communication with both SFL and MNRF District representatives.

Caribou Forest Recommendation #5:

Corporate MNRF shall revise the 2009 FMPM requirements for Tables FMP-11 and FMP-14 so that the Phase II planned harvest is accurately depicted by including any remaining Phase I planned harvest area and volume.

Action(s):

In 2017, the Forest Management Planning Manual was revised to include operational planning for the full ten year period of the forest management plan.

Organization and position responsible:

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

Deadline date:

Complete at time of action plan preparation.

Method of tracking progress:

N/A

Caribou Forest Recommendation #8:

Regional MNRF staff shall provide clear criteria and expected outcomes for decommissioning and reclaiming of roads to remove linear features and increase productive forest.

Action(s):

The MNRF NWR has initiated the Road Renewal and Rehabilitation for Resource Management Objectives project. This project will identify the conditions to be achieved for returning road segments to the productive land base and the information management requirements for recording in GIS. Restrictions for vehicular access must as a pre-requisite be achieved to a level that allows for sufficient tree regeneration to meet productivity standards. It will also describe the conditions for road segments that should be achieved to claim that the feature is either no longer a road for the purposes of caribou conservation, or the feature is no longer expected to provide an advantage to predators when the surrounding habitat is back on line and expected to be suitable for caribou occupancy.

Organization and position responsible:

MNRF, Regional Operations Division, NWR Regional Resources Advisory Unit - Senior Science Specialist and Supervisor.

Deadline date:

Anticipated project completion early 2019.

Method of tracking progress:

Approved NWR technical/FMP note providing direction to planning teams; Status Report, Forest Management Plan, and Annual Work Schedule; Annual Reports as submitted; Forest Information Portal records of Annual Report submission, review and acceptance.

Principle 4: Plan Assessment and Implementation

Caribou Forest Recommendation #6:

Corporate MNRF shall work with the forest industry to review the basis for determining when wood may be considered available and reported as such in the Wood Availability Reports.

Action(s):

1. MNRF will continuously monitor wood utilization from the Caribou Forest and will maintain communications with the SFL holder regarding utilization levels and plans for future use of wood from the Caribou Forest. Using professional judgement, advice from the SFL holder, contextual information gathered from various sources and analytical review, MNRF will identify long-term available wood supplies through reporting on the Available Wood Reports.
2. As part of continuous monitoring, MNRF will compare predicted and actual utilization levels and incorporate findings and trends into its analysis of available wood supply.

Organization and position responsible:

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

Deadline date:

Ongoing

Method of tracking progress:

Published monthly updates to the Available Wood Report

Caribou Forest Recommendation #7:

Regional MNRF staff shall provide guidance to District MNRF staff on the appropriate FMPM mechanism for a timely review and approval of harvest block road rehabilitation efforts by the Company.

Action(s):

The MNRF NWR has initiated the “Road Renewal and Rehabilitation for Resource Management Objectives” project. One of the objectives of this project is to determine conditions that should be achieved in order for MNRF to consider the company role in the Use Management Strategy to be complete and to accept transfer of responsibility for forest access roads to the Crown. This project will inform MNRF on the appropriate mechanism for how and when the road decommissioning and rehabilitation actions taken by the company may be approved. This will include advice on data standards and information management. Field training for practitioners will be provided.

Organization and position responsible:

MNRF, Regional Operations Division, NWR Regional Resources Advisory Unit - Senior Science Specialist and Supervisor.

MNRF, Regional Operations Division, NWR Regional Resources Planning Unit – FMP Specialist and Supervisor.

Deadline date:

Early 2019

Method of tracking progress:

A draft report has been submitted by the Science Specialist. Advice on data standards and information management has been incorporated into the current Forest Information Manual (2017). Further direction will be developed and provided to planning teams in the upcoming 2020 FMP Operations Training (**early 2019**).

Caribou Forest Recommendation #9:

Regional MNRF staff shall provide Sioux Lookout MNRF District staff with interim direction on criteria for accepting that an “A” Caribou block has been closed. The District Manager should assign a District MNRF staff person to oversee timely and appropriate negotiation of access to wood supply in Caribou blocks.

Action(s):

1. Defined direction will be developed and provided for staff to document how to complete an assessment relative to the unique features of the DCHS block. This documentation will be referenced in the following FMP in order to ensure that ongoing actions may be followed through on, tracked, and documented.
2. Wood supply and access have already been determined during development of the 2008-2018 Caribou Forest FMP Long Term Management Direction. The Caribou Forest Phase II 2013-2018 plan section 8.3.1.1 indicates caribou A blocks that have not had harvest activity in them to date will not be harvested until an assessment of the level of harvest completion of all mosaic blocks is completed by the District by the time of review of the Long Term Management Direction for the 2018-2028 FMP. As per section 8.3.1.1 table 2 the projected harvest completion dates have been listed by mosaic block.

Organization and position responsible:

MNRF, Regional Operations Division, Northwest Region, Regional Planning Biologist (lead), Supervisor; conduct assessments

MNRF, Regional Operations Division, Sioux Lookout District, Management Biologist and Management Forester.

Deadline date:

Complete at time of action plan preparation. Direction has been provided to the Caribou Forest Planning Team and the new 2020 Forest Management Plan has resolved this issue and has documented progress.

Method of tracking progress:

N/A

Principle 5: System Support

Caribou Forest Recommendation #10:

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

Action(s):

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.

Organization and position responsible:

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

Deadline date:

Complete at time of action plan preparation.

Method of tracking progress:

N/A.

Caribou Forest Recommendation #11:

MNRF's Regional Operations Division shall engage with Forest Information Portal users in the MNRF Districts to gain an improved understanding of the issues and shortcomings associated with the FI Portal and use the results to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of electronic file transfer.

Action(s):

MNRF will provide opportunities for regional/district FI Portal users to identify system issues and review and provide input on proposed operational system modifications.

Organization and position responsible:

MNRF, Regional Operations Division, Integration Branch, Information Coordination Section, Information Management Specialist

Deadline date:

January, 2020

Method of tracking progress:

Regular meeting agendas and meeting minutes documenting topics and member input.

Principle 7: Achievement of Management Objectives & Forest Sustainability

Caribou Forest Recommendation #14:

Corporate MNRF shall develop appropriate metrics and methodologies to validate strategic modeling assumptions related to successional pathways, and to assess progress towards achieving long-term management direction.

Action(s):

The Forest Management Planning Manual contains planning requirements for the monitoring of operations in a forest management plan. During the planning of operations, provisions for monitoring must be prepared and documented, and shall include a description of the program for carrying out assessments of regeneration success for naturally and artificially regenerated areas. This description must describe the methodology to be used, the timing and duration of monitoring, and documentation and reporting of monitoring results. During plan implementation, these results are analyzed at the stand level to determine if forest level objectives are being met. The results of this analysis are used to adapt objectives and management strategies in the development of future FMPs.

The Silvicultural Enhancement Initiative has established new silviculture policy for Ontario (the decision was posted on the Environmental Registry (ER) January 8, 2016). 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 new approaches to establishing regeneration standards, assessing those regeneration standards and incorporating the results of silviculture activities into future FMPs.

Organization and position responsible:

MNRF, Policy Division, Crown Forests and Lands Policy Branch
Forest Guides and Silviculture Section Manager (Review of silviculture policies and FOSM)

Forest Legislation and Planning Section Manager (FMPM)

Forest Sustainability and Information Section Manager (FIM)

Deadline date:

Complete at time of action plan preparation.

Method of tracking progress:

N/A

SFL Licenses

Licence Extension

This section describes the licence extension recommendations made by the applicable auditors in 2014. The Big Pic and the Whiskey Jack Forests are managed by the Crown and are therefore not included in the list below.

Caribou Forest Recommendation on Licence Extension

The audit team concludes that management of the Caribou 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 IFAPP. The audit team recommends that the Minister extend the term of the licence by five years.

Lakehead Forest Recommendation on Licence Extension

The audit team concludes that management of the Lakehead 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 SFL held by Greenmantle Forest 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 #542460 for a further five years.

White River Forest Recommendation on Licence Extension

The audit team concludes that management of the White River Forest was 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 White River Forest Products Ltd. 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 550399 for a further five years.

Licence review

Sections 26(3) and (3.1) of the CFSA require MNRF to 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 process.

2014 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.
2. Should the results of the review yield a recommendation to extend the licence, Indigenous consultations will be undertaken on the extension decision.
3. Results of the reviews and consultations will be evaluated and if satisfactory will be advanced to the Lieutenant Governor in Council for consideration and approval, then to the Minister for the SFL to be extended.

Organization & position responsible:

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

Deadline date:

1. Reviews completed by June 30, 2018.
2. Indigenous consultations to be initiated within six months of completing the review.
3. Upon completion of consultation, a recommendation on licence extension will be advanced for the Lieutenant Governor in Council consideration and approval.
4. Upon approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, the Minister will be provided with an updated and extended SFL for execution.

Method of tracking progress:

1. Review completed
2. Indigenous consultations initiated
3. If review and consultation are satisfactory, briefing material advanced to Lieutenant Governor in Council
4. If Lieutenant Governor in Council approves, extended SFL advanced to Minister