

2014 Independent Forest Audit Provincial Action Plan Status Report

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 Status Report 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 2014 (IFAPP) which met 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 met the requirements of Ontario Regulation 160/04 made under the CFSA (governing Independent Forest Audits).

The status report addresses the 12 recommendations directed at corporate or regional levels of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) in the 2014 IFAs. The information in this status report is organized according to the Independent Forest Audit Process and Protocol (IFAPP) principles. The status of each recommendation is reported according to Appendix F of the IFAPP and includes each recommendation and its corresponding required actions (as written in the approved Provincial Action Plan), associated progress to date and future tracking requirements, if applicable.

The IFAPP requires the submission of a provincial status report two years following provincial action plan approval or more frequently as may be required by the action plan or Minister. The 2014 Provincial Action Plan was approved September 11, 2018.

The approved 2014 Provincial Action Plan Status Report will be made available on the Ontario government website.

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.

Progress to date:

1. Complete. The District Manager and Regional Director have continued to develop staffing solutions through the Northeast Leadership Team to attain contract and permanent staffing positions, as well as, attaining support from surrounding Districts to ensure responsibilities for management of the forest are maintained.
2. Complete. Annual workload priorities for District staff to meet their forest management responsibilities and obligations have been adjusted through annual workload planning and the continued MNRF Profession Development Plans with staff.

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.

Progress to date:

Complete at time of action plan preparation.

Principle 3: Forest Management Planning

Big Pic Recommendation #1:

Corporate MNRF must redouble its efforts to work towards the timely delivery of Forest Resources Inventory (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 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.

Progress to date:

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

Progress to date:

Complete at time of action plan preparation. Task Complete May 2017. 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 10-year period of the forest management plan.

Progress to date:

Complete at time of action plan preparation.

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.

Progress to date:

Partially Completed. As part of the MNRF-Regional Operations Division's (ROD) Roads and Crossings Long Term Infrastructure Plan project, a revised data model used to store road segment data in Ontario's authoritative spatial database, Land Information Ontario (LIO), was implemented in June 2020. The data model was revised, in part, to accommodate the management of data related the status of road segments in relation to caribou management. These updates were determined by consulting MNRF regional

biologists and the MNRF section responsible for the Forest Information Manual (Forest Planning Policy Section). The updated data model is available for use by MNRF staff (district office resource managers and District GIS Data Technicians) to implement the proposed Road Renewal and Rehabilitation for Resource Management Objectives.

An updated data management guide has been developed and made available to MNRF staff on how to utilize the revised roads layer data model. Training for District GIS Data Technicians is available and will be provided as required.

Work undertaken by the Roads Road Renewal and Rehabilitation Project (RRRP) task team to facilitate the transfer of SLF roads has led to the development of the *Roads Transfer Implementation Bulletin (NER MNRF- June, 2019)* which will inform planning teams as well as industry and MNRF staff practitioners on an accepted process in the NER to transfer the responsibility of roads and road networks, with associated infrastructure, from the SFL to the MNRF or a third party (e.g., cottage association).

This bulletin is currently in the review and approvals stage for similar implementation in the NWR and has not been formally distributed for use. However, in anticipation of similar direction being adopted by planning teams working on the development of forthcoming FMPs, the NW Regional Planning Unit's (RPU) Forest Management Planning Specialist provided the NER roads transfer bulletin to NWR planning teams to incorporate into new FMPs at their discretion with a caveat to this effect and to provide the most recently available guidance to industry and MNRF staff on roads use management strategies (RUMS); transferring roads responsibility, decommissioning, and reporting.

Future tracking requirements:

Approved NWR Roads transfer Implementation Bulletin, SFL/MNRF/Third Party Roads Transfer agreement, roads transfer documentation, Annual Reports and GIS road segment layers and approved FMPs.

Organization and position responsible:

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

Deadline date:

April 1, 2023 and on going

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.

Progress to date:

1. Complete. As part of its regular business, the MNRF works with forest management unit managers and existing industry stakeholders to estimate the available wood supplies on each management unit in Ontario, and produces the Ontario Available Wood Report that identifies the annual wood supply estimated to be potentially available and provides contact information for unit managers who can market available wood supplies. This report is available through the Ontario Open Data Catalogue.
2. Complete. The MNRF is in the process of developing a Wood Utilization Review of the Caribou Forest in accordance with Forest Management Directives and Procedures FOR 03 01 19, Monitoring the Use of Crown Wood Supply. Development of Wood Utilization Reviews has become part of the MNRF's regular business.

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.

Progress to date:

Partially Complete. Work undertaken by the Roads Road Renewal and Rehabilitation Project (RRRP) task team to facilitate the transfer of SLF roads has led to the development of the *Roads Transfer Implementation Bulletin (NER MNRF- June, 2019)* which will inform planning teams as well as industry and MNRF staff practitioners on an

accepted process in the NER to transfer the responsibility of roads and road networks, with associated infrastructure, from the SFL to the MNRF or a third party (e.g., cottage association).

This bulletin is currently in the review and approvals stage for similar implementation in the NWR and has not been formally distributed for use. However, in anticipation of similar direction being adopted by planning teams working on the development of forthcoming FMP's, the NW Regional Planning Unit's (RPU) Forest Management Planning Specialist provided the NER bulletin to NWR planning teams to incorporate into new FMPs at their discretion with a caveat to this effect and to provide the most recently available guidance to industry and MNRF staff on roads use management strategies (RUMS); transferring roads responsibility, decommissioning, and reporting.

Future tracking requirements:

Approved NWR Roads transfer Implementation Bulletin, SFL/MNRF/Third Party Roads Transfer agreement, roads transfer documentation, Annual Reports and GIS road segment layers and approved FMPs.

Organization and position responsible:

MNRF, Regional Operations Division, NWR Regional Planning Unit – FMP Specialist and Superviso

Deadline date:

April 1, 2023 and on going

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.

Progress to 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.

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.

Progress to date:

Complete at time of action plan preparation.

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.

Progress to date:

Complete. ROD has begun executing on its Common Business Solution (CBS) strategy, the division's long-term plan guiding the modernization of the division's natural resource management approvals and compliance services and supporting IT systems, with the introduction of the new online Natural Resources Information Portal (NRIP). NRIP provides industry and people with modern, fast, accessible, and secure natural resource management services and the information they require. As part of the CBS strategy, the FI Portal and eFMP have been identified as the top priority for modernization by ROD. NRIP went live in the Spring 2020 and focuses on modernizing the delivery of Ontario's forest management planning services. Transition from the current Forest Information Portal to NRIP started in June 2020 following a phased approach, all users will be fully transitioned to the new system by October 2020.

ROD engaged in several consultation and discovery activities designed to better understand issues and shortcomings associated with the legacy systems and used the results to guide the development of the new modernized NRIP system supporting the exchange of Forestry information.

These activities included:

- FI Portal and Electronic Forest Management Plan (eFMP) Modernization Visioning Workshop held June 6-7, 2017. During this workshop subject matter experts and staff from the IT Modernization Unit gathered to review the current state of the FI Portal and eFMP processes and tools and envision a future state for both.
- Forest Management Planning discovery phase brought together stakeholders from across the Ministry, industry and end users to help ensure project development objectives and priorities were clear from the outset. The research was designed to fully scope, and support the plan, development and implementation of the FI Portal/eFMP modernization with a goal of gaining a detailed understanding of stakeholders and end users. Research gathered during the discovery phase provided vital insight helping to better understand, in-depth, the needs of the Ministry, stakeholders and end users
- Online user surveys on the FI Portal and eFMP sites were employed to provide users with an opportunity to provide their input, results have helped improve exchange and delivery of information to serve stakeholders better. The survey continues to be employed on the new NRIP site; ongoing user feedback will be used to help inform continuous improvements.

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.

Progress to date:

Complete at time of action plan preparation.

SFL Licences

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 (#542481) 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.

Progress to date:

1. Complete. The licence reviews for the applicable SFLs for the above forests have been completed.
2. Complete. The results of the above reviews yielded recommendations to extend the licences and Indigenous consultations were undertaken on the extension decisions.
3. Complete. The licences have been extended by the Minister.