

Okanagan SFM Plan

Public Advisory Group Meeting Minutes

June 18, 2015. MoFLNRO Office, Vernon

Attendees: Keith Boulter, Dave Gill, Mike Watkins, Paul Ross, Ted McRea, Don Guild, Patti Meger, Darcie Annesley, Tony Zanatto, Don Dobson, Renee Clark, Suzan Lapp, Heather Rice, Glenn Theim, Pat Salm

Meeting started at 9:30AM. The meeting began with a safety/orientation briefing of the meeting room, introductions and a review of the meeting agenda. There were no additional items for the agenda.

Action Items from previous meeting:

1. Sub-committee meeting to review Target #20 - watershed ECA's and peak flow.
Don Dobson advised that a meeting was held on March 5, 2015 involving advisory group sub-committee members and Rita Winkler. See meeting topic below for more detail.
2. Licences were going to evaluate their road risk rating process and share the information with the advisory group.
Paul, Darcie and Dave explained their process to select a few roads and identify the risk using each company's risk rating system. Generally, the results were found to be similar and in some cases the different systems would be one risk category off (ie. low to medium or high medium). In no case was a road identified as high risk in one system found to low in another system or vice versa.

Field Trip Report

Dave Gill went over the May 27th field trip – put on for the Okanagan TSA committee with the invitation extended to advisory group members. The stops included a look at operational stumping, a fire mitigation project lead by WFN in West Kelowna (funding support by the UBCM) and a proposed harvest area in the Glenrosa area of West Kelowna. The idea of a combined field trip such as this was well received by both advisory group members in attendance as well as by the Ministry who appreciated the views and dialogue between government, industry and public. Dave, Paul Ross or Tony Zanatto are happy to discuss any of the stops with advisory group members if more information is desired.

Water Subcommittee – update on activities

The meeting noted earlier in the minutes was attended by Don Dobson, Paul Ross, Renee Clark, Patti Meger, Scott Smith and Rita Winkler. Paul summarized the meeting with the following notes:

Topics of discussion:

1. Channel measurements to compare to 1990's data.
2. ECA calculation/cumulative impacts/sub-basin impacts.
3. Does ECA provide us understand the potential for change in the watershed.
4. Reviewed Penticton Creek Watershed experiment logging effects on water yield preliminary results.
5. Reviewed Mayson Lake Snow Recovery.
6. Stednick/Mclure fire/Russell work on radiation units.
7. Request from other parts of BC = utility of ECA, managing/understanding a changing watershed, refinement of processes based on research/observations.
8. Source assessments/multi-barrier reports/watershed purveyors measurements of water quality.

Don advised that Rita's work includes a look at hydrological recovery both from the accumulation side (ground and canopy) as well as from the snow melt side. Initial evaluations have identified a difference to when watersheds are fully recovered – that watersheds deemed to be fully recovered on the accumulation side (which is how current recovery is estimated in the province) might not be fully recovered on the melt side. Work on this is continuing. Rita did pull together a group of experts to brainstorm this with plans for the group to reconvene in the fall. As Don is involved, he will keep the subcommittee and Pat informed of any new information and report back. Until new information is reviewed within the context of the Okanagan SFM Plan, Target 20 on watershed ECA's and managing peak flows will remain.

Review of the 2014/15 SFM Monitoring Report

Pat provided a brief history of the development of the Okanagan Sustainable Forest Management (OK SFM) Plan and how this was the fifth year of reporting against the current requirements of the CSA forest certification standard. The Plan contains indicators and targets that help to assess sustainability against the Criteria and Elements set out in the CSA certification standard. The Monitoring report is a roll-up of the participating licencees performance against the targets in the SFM Plan. Highlights of the Monitoring report were covered. In total, 39 out of 43 targets (91%) were fully met, slightly better than the 36/43 targets met in the previous reporting period.

One item to note with this years report is the absence of Gorman's in the reporting data. This can result in some large differences in trend data, particularly where actual numbers (such as total area or voulume harvested) are used. For areas that are measuring performance as a percent (such as percent of area in permanent access), the absence of Gorman data is not really noticeable.

The Monitoring Report contains a bit of perspective information (Section 5) with tables/charts indicating plan area statistics and relating them to what occurred in the reporting period. The report also provided a quick look at how the indicators and targets tie back to the SFM Criteria and Elements in the CSA certification standard (Table 6.1). Each of the targets and the performance against these is then shown in the second table. It was noted that some targets are used to measure multiple indicators – thus achievement or non-achievement of a target can have a cascading affect throughout the Plan.

Pat asked the group if there were any specific targets that they would like to review. The group was comfortable with Pat taking the lead in reviewing targets that he felt should be reviewed with the opportunity to visit any others as we went through the Monitoring Report.

Target 2- Old Growth Management Areas

The target is to have not net loss of OGMA's. It was noted that total OGMA area has declined by 20,000 ha but that this was a result of Gorman's leaving the Plan as well as some shifts in other licencees operating areas. The process as to how licencees harvest within and replace OGMA was explained.

Target 4- Tree Species Diversity

The reporting for this target also includes information on what percent the leading species occupies the site where there are 3 or more species present. Licencees reported that the leading species occupied approximately one half (53 %) of sites, meaning the other species also accounted for nearly one half of the trees on the site. This information indicates that most sites are reforested with multiple species and there is a good distribution in the species mix for those cutblocks.

Target 5- Age Class Distribution

The assessment results currently only show results for age classes 1-5 and then the total (for all age classes). This was felt by some to be confusing – it was suggested and agreed upon that in next years report, a separate row for age classes 6-9 combined would be added to the table.

Target 10- Reforestation – appropriate species

Target met for past 3 years – this is quite an accomplishment. Over 9 million trees planted and all of them on ecologically suitable sites. Given issues with nursery shortfalls and having to re-assign trees originally slated for other areas into sites where nursery shortages occurred, this is a well done.

Target 13- Reforestation – Free-Growing Success

The target to have all cutblocks reach free growing requirements on or before the latest date was not met. There was a total of 127 hectares that was not declared free growing prior to the late free growing date (out of a total of 5568.3 ha surveyed for free growing). More information is provided in the report's appendix where the individual licensee summary information is located.

Target 15- Harvest vs AAC

The flexibility to manage cut control within the government regulations and policy was explained. It is this flexibility, both over a term of 5 years and at a greater level for any given year, that demonstrates why the the AAC target and the actual billed harvest volume are not in alignment on an annual basis.

Target 20- Harvest in Community Watersheds

There were 2 watersheds (Mill and Oyama) where ECA's in the snow sensitive zone exceeded 50%. Peak flow hazards for these watersheds was high. While all harvest in the Oyama watershed and nearly all in the Mill watershed was below the snow sensitive zone, there was discussion about how that might impact water quality (as compared to quantity). The area below the snow sensitive zone could also be highly sensitive from a water quality perspective and the current target does not consider this.

It was also felt important to identify how both how high the ECA was planning to go in high peak flow hazard situations as well as the estimated length of time that a watershed was going to remain at a high peak flow hazard before dropping back down to moderate. Rene requested that she would like to see some trend information in the data - would be nice to know how long a watershed has been in a high peak flow hazard rating for example.

Target 21 - Stream Crossings in Community Watersheds

Seventy percent (7/10) permanent road stream crossings incorporated a water quality effectiveness evaluation into their design, construction and maintenance. BCTS indicated that evaluations on the remaining 3 crossings are scheduled to occur this field season.

Target 22- Permanent Road Inspections

Road inspections were not completed as planned, thus not meeting the target. Darcie spent some time explaining the BCTS situation and how the previously scheduled inspections as well as current inspections will be completed this year. BCTS will be utilizing a report that will provide planned/completed inspections; report to be reviewed every 2 months.

Target 31- Environment and Safety Training

The target to have 100% of the contractors with safety and environment training was not met. There was no further discussion beyond what was written in the comments section of the report and Tolko's annual summary report. Paul advised that COR is an acronym for Contractor Orientation Record.

Target 35- Participation in Higher Level Planning

The first part of the target – Licencee involvement in the Okanagan Shuswap LRMP or other higher level plan meetings was discussed. As there has been no activity and the LRMP implementation committee has disbanded, it was agreed this should be removed – and also the target in the monitoring report should be changed to reflect this (“Public/Stakeholder participation on Forest Planning” was suggested).

Target 38 – Forestry Contractor Safety

Discussed how this was reported by BCTS. Agreed that as these small contractors were exempted under the BCTS safety program, there was no need to include them in the total (with the asterisk explaining this). Subsequent reports will reflect this discussion.

Target 40 – Responding to Public Communication Requests

Some clarification was offered related to public requests where licencee efforts to obtain relevant information was incomplete. There was agreement at the meeting that where a request for information was made, and the licencee was still in the process of accumulating data pertaining to that information, that a response within 30 days advising the person of this was appropriate. There was the expectation that information sharing would occur in a timely fashion once data was collected and a planned direction taken.

Current DFA Issues, Summary, Wrap-Up

CSA Standard Revision

Pat explained that the CSA Standard is revised every 5 years. Initial draft of the revised standard requirements (normative) has just been completed, the CSA Technical Committee is now working on guidance piece (informative). The public review process will commence once all work is complete – likely throughout August and September.

Action: Pat will post the draft normative document on the SFM website along with the CSA User Groups update on what has changed for those that might be interested (look on the documents page under publications of interest).

MoFLNRO Cumulative effects framework announcement

The link to the announcement was provided in the agenda. The announcement indicated steps the government was taking following the AG's report of May 2015. Patti Meger wanted to know how the Okanagan area was involved in this initiative. Ted advised that Doug Lewis and Eric Valdal were the two fellows that have the lead on developing the cumulative effects framework and model and that the District has been involved by supplying information to the model from the Forest and Range Evaluation Program (FREP). The group was interested in seeing if one of them could attend the next meeting and present on what they are doing to implement the auditor general's recommendations on cumulative effects.

Action: Ted will speak to Doug and Eric about their availability at the next meeting.

Update on Timber Supply Review for the Okanagan

Don wanted to know what was happening with the allowable harvest level in the Okanagan and if we could see it decreasing after the uplifts for mountain pine beetle. Ted reported that the Chief Forester advised that he wanted to revisit the Okanagan timber supply after 5 years – with the last Timber Supply Review (TSR) occurring 3 years ago, the process to re-commence will begin fairly soon (generally it takes 2 years to complete).

Fall Meeting

Agreed to a tentative **meeting date of Thursday, February 11, 2016**. Meeting to occur in Kelowna – location to be determined (Pat to see if the ECCO Centre is available. Ted to contact Doug/Eric on their availability as a speaker at our next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 2:30 pm.