

UPDATE Forest Certification



Fort St. John Pilot Project

March 2007

Background

The Fort St. John Pilot Project (FSJPP) area encompasses the Fort St. John Timber Supply Area (TSA) in the Peace region of northeast BC. The combined assessment on the FSJPP area applies to a defined forest area (DFA) of 4,152,048 hectares with an allowable annual harvest of 2,062,805 m³. As part of the commitment to sustainable forest management and forest certification made by the FSJPP participants, an audit team from KPMG Performance Registrar Inc. completed the following assessments of the FSJPP in July 2005:

- A re-registration assessment of the FSJPP DFA to the Canadian Standards Association's standard for Sustainable Forest Management (CSA-SFM); and
- Field assessments of Canfor's operations in the Fort St. John TSA as part of a corporate-wide periodic assessment to the ISO 14001 standard for Environmental Management Systems (EMS).

The audit found that the Sustainable Forest Management System (SFM) in use on the FSJPP continues to meet the CSA-SFM standard. In addition, Canfor's EMS continues to be effectively implemented and meet the requirements of the ISO 14001 standard. CSA-SFM registration demonstrates a strong commitment to sustainable forest management, and is a significant achievement for the FSJPP participants.

The Audit

- **Background** – The FSJPP was implemented across the Fort St. John TSA in 2001 as a pilot project for an improved regulatory framework for forest practices. The main components of the project include regulatory flexibility to facilitate adaptive approaches to forest management, landscape level planning through an SFM plan, ongoing public involvement through a Public Advisory Group (PAG) and the adoption and implementation of certification systems as surrogates for the existing administrative process.
- The FSJPP participants include BC Timber Sales, Cameron River Logging Ltd., Canadian Forest Products Ltd., Dunne-Za Ventures LP, Louisiana-Pacific Canada Ltd. and Tembec Inc. However, all field operations are conducted by Canfor and BC Timber Sales. All of the participants have consented in writing to take part in the pilot project and be subject to the terms and conditions of the FSJPP Regulation.
- The CSA-SFM and ISO 14001 standards require regular audits by the registrar to assess ongoing conformance with the standards and the implementation of action plans related to previous assessments. In addition, the *Fort St. John Pilot Project Regulation* requires periodic independent audits of the Participants' compliance with the regulation.





- **Audit Team** – The audit was conducted by a three person audit team consisting of two BC registered professional foresters and a BC registered professional biologist. Two of the auditors are accredited SFM/EMS auditors while the third auditor is an accredited EMS auditor.
- **Field Audit** – The team conducted interviews with Participant staff and contractors and examined EMS, CSA and compliance records, monitoring information and public involvement records, including completed questionnaires to solicit Public Advisory Group (PAG) and First Nation representatives’ knowledge of and level of satisfaction with the public participation process. The team also conducted a field assessment of 55 sites to assess operational planning, harvesting, silviculture, camps and road construction, maintenance and deactivation.

Noteworthy Comments

- Our assessment indicated that the SFM and EMS systems continue to be effectively implemented in the pilot project area. In addition, the participants have effectively addressed all nonconformities identified during previous assessments.
- The operation has been successful in generating greater interest in and participation from PAG members in recent PAG meetings in comparison to past meetings. In addition, PAG members questioned were generally very positive about the established SFM public consultation process.
- The operations are ensuring prompt reforestation to meet the SFM establishment delay target.
- The field audit identified examples of harvest blocks having well placed wildlife tree patches designed to protect understorey spruce.
- There were low levels of ground disturbance observed on the sample of blocks reviewed in the field.

Key Areas of Nonconformity

- A review of EMS records identified the following weaknesses:
 - Isolated instances were identified where Canfor silviculture inspection forms were not completely filled in.
 - Canfor FMS pre-work forms were not always being signed by the Canfor supervisor or contractor.
 - Canfor project risk ranking forms were incomplete for two harvest blocks field inspected.
 - BCTS inspection forms did not always indicate whether it was monitoring or full inspections that were being conducted.
 - Canfor inspections on one harvest block did not include documentation of an assessment of treatment around a non-classified drainage (NCD), whereas the site level plan (SLP) noted that caution should be exercised around the NCD.

CSA-SFM Re-Registration Assessment and ISO 14001 Periodic Assessment

Major nonconformities	0
Minor nonconformities	2
Opportunities for improvement	7

Types of audit findings

Major nonconformities:

Are pervasive or critical to the achievement of the SFM Objectives.

Major nonconformities must be addressed immediately or certification cannot be achieved / maintained.

Minor nonconformities:

Are isolated incidents that are non-critical to the achievement of SFM Objectives.

All nonconformities require the development of a corrective action plan within 30 days of the audit, which must be fully implemented by the operation within 3 months.

Opportunities for Improvement:

Are not nonconformities but are comments on specific areas of the SFM System where improvements can be made.



- A BCTS block containing a stratum originally prescribed in the SLP for aspen regeneration was converted to a spruce plantation without first seeking the required approval from the Ministry of Forests' District Manager for a stocking standard amendment.

Appropriate action plans were received and approved by KPMG to address each of the identified areas of nonconformity.

Key Opportunities for Improvement

- Field site visits to active site preparation and planting operations identified an opportunity for Canfor to provide clearer guidance in its emergency response procedures with respect to fire and spill response equipment requirements for silviculture activities.
- The audit identified the following opportunities for the operations to improve their implementation of operational controls:
 - There were minor encroachments from site preparation operations (mounding) into the machine free zones on an NCD and S6 stream on two Canfor blocks.
 - Drainage control could have been improved upon to better manage water on a BCTS in-block road and in ditches between the cutblock and the mainline (i.e., drainage control had been constructed but was significantly disturbed during fire fighting activities conducted by the licensee).
 - Sediment control on a Canfor managed road was found to be inadequate to prevent sediment from a ditch and bridge deck surface from being introduced into an S3 stream.
 - Debris piles were found to be poorly piled on isolated Canfor harvest blocks to facilitate effective burning.
- The audit identified the following opportunities to improve Canfor's cutblock maps:
 - The cutblock boundary depicted on a SLP map was difficult to delineate in one isolated case (involving a harvest block located adjacent to previously harvested areas) due to the colour and weight of the boundary line on the map.
 - A planting map for one harvest block that prescribed the planting of spruce and pine in separate treatment units did not delineate where the treatment units were.
- Although the field audit determined that the sample of harvest blocks inspected were left in an appropriate state when seasonally shutdown for extended periods of time, shutdown inspections were not always being conducted to verify that all blocks seasonally shutdown were left in an appropriate state.
- A review of SLPs and an assessment of their implementation during the field audit determined that there is inconsistency and occasional lack of clarity in SLP specifications around stub tree retention requirements (i.e., size and



Excellent examples of understorey spruce protection were observed during the audit.



distribution). This lack of guidance may have contributed to the variability in stub tree retention observed on harvest blocks field reviewed (particularly around the preferred sizes of stubs). In addition, the field audit determined that although stub trees are widely retained less consideration appears to be given to the retention of live trees despite some SLPs prescribing both as options.

- Although the field audit determined that the operations retain debris piles for small fur bearers such as fisher and martin where requested to do so from trappers, the practice is not widely prescribed and implemented in the DFA. In addition, for one harvest block inspected the SLP provided little detail on the preferred size, configuration and location of wildlife debris piles to be retained that could have encouraged better retention for improved wildlife usage.
- The operations have endeavoured to invite the broader public to the most recent biannual PAG meeting, however paper and radio advertisements did not succeed in drawing wide participation. A review of the advertisements indicated little detail as to the public's role in the meeting and consequently the benefits associated with their attendance.



Low levels of ground disturbance were observed in the field.

Contacts:

Mike Alexander, RPF, CEA (604) 691-3401
 David Bebb, RPF, CEA (604) 691-3451
 Chris Ridley-Thomas, RPBio, CEA (604) 691-3088

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