

**Crowsnest Forest Products
Public Advisory Committee
Kanata Inn (Blairmore)
November 30th, 2023 Meeting Notes**

Present: Alix Hennig, Brenda Davidson, Shannon Frank, Annett Mahieux-Bone, Wade Aebli, Dianne Sawley, Larry Sears, Duncan Abercombie, Gary Clark, Jason Mogilefsky (SLS), Errol Kutcher (SLS), Matt Denney (SLS)

Absent: Kyle Rast, Ron Davis, Dave Whitten, Kate Hamilton, Kelly McDonald, Brian Gallant, Vicki Kubik, Jim Lynch Staunton, Bruce Mowat

Meeting started at 11:00 a.m.

Welcome

- CFP provided an update on the change of ownership for the company, indicating that Spray Lake Sawmills/Crowsnest Forest Products is now owned by West Fraser. The Company is excited to be part of West Fraser and are not anticipating any changes to the committee or the FMP development timelines.
- There was a planning development team meeting last week and we are close to wrapping up the draft VOITs. As emailed to the PAC yesterday, the draft VOITs are just about completed and haven't changed much since our last review. The updates to the VOITs have been to align the wording with the SSRP and the LFMP.
- The plan for the meeting is to provide a brief FMP update, review timelines, and to focus the majority of the meeting on capturing draft VOIT input.
- Next steps are to review the PACs VOIT input and finalize the draft VOITs and begin developing the spatial harvest sequence. We will review the draft spatial harvest sequence at our next meeting, May of 2024.

Round Table introductions

- Participants engaged in a round table of introductions.

FMP Update

- CFP described the current efforts for the forest management plan (FMP). The company has submitted key building blocks for the plan. This includes the landbase (inventory) and yield curves (growth tables) to the GoA at the end of September. The company was hoping for feedback by Nov 15, but the GoA is still reviewing the items. The company is looking for agreement-in-principal to ensure the plan is on track. The next step is to start building the draft SHS scenarios finding the one that best balances the VOITs. The various SHS scenarios will have associated VOIT outputs that can be compared. The objective is finding the SHS that best balances sometimes competing objectives.

VOITS

- The VOITs are still in draft form and the Company is still looking for input and working with GoA to obtain agreement in principal. The latest draft version was provided to the group, but it is still not a public document.
- PAC – Discussion on grizzly bear and how historic range has significantly been reduced. Was 2000 kms now down to only 20 kms. Same is true for elk & wolves. Apex predators and indicator species should be studied. If the Apex species are present- all of the other species will be intact. There is a challenge of trade-offs when working with everything from; forestry, mining, recreation, ranching, hunting all share the same area. WWF study showed a historic 70% decline in most species compared to the pre-industrial condition. The point is that the activities on the Livingstone area should be well thought out as it is the last refuge for wildlife.
- PAC – Will the acquisition result in a change to harvesting practices, specifically stumpside processing
- CFP – It may, if a suitable alternative prescription can be generated. Stumpside processing helps retain moisture and protect seedlings from desiccating winds. North and east slopes probably don't need as much slash as moisture is less limiting on the spruce sites. In some places, there may be too much debris.
- PAC – Ranchers are supportive of alternative prescription to try and reduce some of the slash in the harvest areas and are in favor of not leaving slash on spruce sites.
- PAC – Support the creation of small mammal habitat by using within block brush piling to the extent that is it not a fire hazard. The piles make great hotels for small mammals.
- PAC- Cut to length gives more options rather than treating every sites the same.
- PAC-Do practices change because of drought conditions?
- CFP- Yes when conditions are very dry and fire hazard goes up we operate at night and at times there are forest closures.

Forest Encroachment

- CFP- Aspen encroachment is a problem and slash is a problem for grazing.
- CFP – The company's plan for addressing encroachment is to establish a baseline of grasslands, using the AVI info collected for the FMP and that the company will not be implementing afforestation on grasslands. The challenge really is the deciduous as there is so much of it out there that is dead and dying and no market to warrant commercial harvest.
- CFP – Weve heard from ranchers and biologist in terms of encroachment on our B12 plan and the biggest challenge was that aspen forests are not being renewed and as a result, there's habitat and range loss. If there was a biofuels or gasification plant or some other financial incentive to remove deciduous that would make it more feasible to manage deciduous.
- PAC – Concerned about the loss of grass in old stands and they are converted to regenerating stands. In some, the tree densities are too thick.
- PAC – Also concerned about deciduous encroachment. Some estimate this as high as 5% loss per year in grasslands when comparing today's landscape to the 1920 photos.

- PAC - B.C. land management handbook includes details on climate change. Will this be included in the FMP or how is it being managed on the landscape.
- CFP – there are a number of progeny sites that are assessing how trees grow and survival over time, but the data will not be used for the timber supply model. The growth data for the timber supply model comes from updated tree measurements across the forest.
- PAC- we did a prescribed burn project near Lyndon creek southwest of Claresholm that showed some promise but more burning was needed along with water and fencing for cattle. There needed to do a third burn. Need to have the area set up with water and fencing to have grazing pressure to keep the aspen young and browsed down.
- PAC-Aspen coming back in is then tender and breaks off in your hand and is good forage.
- PAC-Managing aspen encroachment overtime mechanically or with prescribed fire is too expensive. Spraying and grazing is likely the way to keep it managed.
- PAC – Not may controlled burns have happened as often when the conditions are right to burn, the crews are staged in case an uncontrolled fire starts somewhere else.
- PAC – is there potentially open funds available for FRIAA that could be use in a aspen ecosystem restoration project?
- CFP – Agreed there’s potential for sure, to look at a ecosystem restoration/agro forestry project focusing on aspen encroachment and moving that forest type towards an open conifer savanna forest type that would benefit grazing and wildlife.
- PAC – Agreed a pilot project dealing with how to manage for aspen encroachment on the landbase while taking into consideration environmental and ecological requirement the trees provide is a worthwhile joint project.
- PAC- Young aspen is preferred by Moose, would we leave some of the aspen?
- CFP – yes, wouldn’t want to try and do a total removal.

Invasive plants

- PAC- Any disturbance spreads weeds, out of province quads on trails and staging areas is where you see the worst of it.
- PAC-Not an easy issue when it comes to invasive weeds.
- PAC- what comes in first after logging?
- PAC- Fireweed, than natural forbes and shrubs, then grass and trees.
- PAC – recognized the current rules that are in place for the company such as washing equipment between moves to prevent spread of weeds.
- PAC – big problem seems to be with thistle & how with any disturbance, including mole hills, the plant establishes. Another problem unfortunately is timothy as it out compete native grasses, but has no nutrients as forage. If it can be grazed early in the season it can be knocked back a bit.
- PAC – scarification can lead to issues. Hawk weed, blue weed are issues. Birds and deer spread the plants. Purple bells are an issue, but not frequent in the forest reserve.
- PAC – Thistle can have a benefit to soil. Reduce compaction and may have a limited lifespan.
- CFP – we currently participate with Ranchland county (there was an industrial cooperative program) where we identify sites of noxious weeds and they chemically treat the weeds. Theres a meeting scheduled with the manager of the program next week to review our role in the program.
- PAC –Theres challenges with seed mixes & finding native seed mixes not having timothy or smooth brome. Seed mixes need to be weed free certified.

- PAC - Rough fescue is the important plant that the community wants to see on the landscape. Often establishment is done with plugs.
- PAC – Castle Crown Wilderness coalition has hired students to action weed problems, both in the parks & the forest reserve that coordinate a weed pull. Maybe they can coordinate with ranchers.
- PAC- on lease land, it's the ranchers responsibility to complete weed control. There's about 15 years of grazing inventories and range health information on the grazing lands.
- Currently CFP is spending \$25k per year on chemical to control weeds with Ranchland County
- PAC – range health assessments could be used to identify where weed problems exist.

Recreation

- PAC- There was a RAG headed up by Jason Nixon, was on the committee, we never heard the outcome of that work.
- PAC- That's right there was the Livingstone Porcupine Hills Footprint Management Plan- to do with trail density, a rec management plan, and a PLUs plan.
- PAC – concern about the cross-country ski trails around the Chinook/Allision PRA that leave the PRA boundary.
- CFP- Current VOIT focus on trails identified through the trails act and the ministerial order that identify the trails.
- PAC- Nordic Club has worked hard on the trails we have and we want them left intact. The PRA is the campground and not all of the trails are in the PRA.
- CFP-Our maps show the Nordic ski trails are primarily within the PRA. Not planning to harvest within the PRA.
- PAC- Nordic club sent maps and information on the trails of concern. The trails are sanctioned and some are multi-purpose trails.
- CFP – We do have the spatial location of the trails in question and can see if any of the stands will be sequenced in the 10/20-year spatial harvest sequence and see if there will be any overlap.
- PAC – Concern about non mapped disposition holder trails that are for use when operating.
- PAC – Previous experience had been to work with the GoA and the company to identify these trails and protect them from harvesting operations. Normally happens through the GTA process or consultation ahead of harvesting.
- PAC- Sent a letter from the minister to CFP indicating other tenure holders need to have historical access kept on the landscape and not reclaimed.
- PAC- Sometimes cutlines are used by CFP and are used by tenure holders for access. These should not be reclaimed.
- PAC- What do you do with non-designated trails? Do you use those? Seems like there are recreational trails all over.
- CFP –There's a cap on how many roads can be kept open as per the LFMP.

Meeting adjourned around 2.20 p.m. Anticipate the next meeting will be some time in May of 2024.