

**Crowsnest Forest Products  
Public Advisory Committee  
Kanata Inn (Blairmore)  
May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Meeting Notes**

**Present:** Alix Hennig, Brenda Davidson, Rick Cooke, Annett Mahieux-Bone, Vicki Kubik, Ron Davis, Bruce Mowat, Duncan Abercombie, Gary Clark, Brian Gallant, David Whitten, Tim Juhlin, Jim Lynch Staunton, Kate Hamilton, Jason Mogilefsky (WF), Errol Kutcher (WF), Matt Denney (WF), Cade Nixdorf (WF), Tyler Steneker (WF) and Kirk Hawthorn (GoA)

**Absent:** Kyle Rast, Larry Sears, Dianne Sawley

Meeting started at 11:00 a.m.

### **Summary**

- CFP provided an update and overview of the FMP timelines and intentions of sharing draft plans for input and to identify issues prior to plan finalization. Plan is a bit behind but gaining momentum and the timelines associated with plan milestones are achievable. Focus of the FMP development is on alignment with the South Saskatchewan Plan and the associated subregional plans. The focus is on protection of communities from wildfire and watershed protection while ensuring all of the other resource values including grazing, bio-diversity and recreation are protected.
- CFP presented a timber supply presentation including the steps taken to arrive at a preliminary draft spatial harvest sequence that meets the VOIT performance measures. CFP invited the PAC to review the SHS to get their initial opinion.
- Next steps, June of 2024, is the draft spatial harvest sequence public review and comment period. CFP will be sending a website link with the draft SHS. Our next meeting will be in the Fall of 2024.

### **Round Table introductions**

- Participants engaged in a round table of introductions.

### **FMP Update**

- CFP has been working on timber supply modelling to meet the performance metrics identified in the VOITs and has arrived at a preliminary spatial harvest sequence that was shared with the PAC. CFP presented a slide deck highlighting the steps required to develop the preliminary draft SHS including precautionary modelling requirements including but not limited to;
  - watershed assessments
  - sustainable timber harvest
  - maintenance of old growth habitat & seral stage levels
  - wildfire management planning priorities

- structure retention
- Identified indicator animal species
- PAC- Is the Company planning on harvesting deciduous? CFP- the company doesn't have the rights to deciduous other than harvesting incidental deciduous. GoA- Deciduous is being modelled in the TSA to quantify the growing stock; track and charge tenure holders for dues; and to monitor deciduous growth compared to the incidental harvest.
- PAC- In a mixed stand, does the company avoid deciduous? CFP-yes except for some incidental harvesting.
- Any idea what the future watercourse buffers will be? GoA- the science suggests that the current stream buffers are working to protect watersheds in terms of measured water quality attributes such as temperature, turbidity, oxygen levels etc. Variable width buffers may be something that is used in the future. The FMP's are completed every 10 years, so if there are changes to buffer widths, the changes would be reflected in future FMP's.
- PAC-Are pine beetle infestations or forest health issues anticipated in the model? GoA- The science suggests, old contiguous patches are considered to be higher risk so by proxy these stands are given a Mountain Pine Beetle risk rating and then the FMP reporting will indicate how the SHS has reduced Mountain Pine Beetle risk. Forest management strives to create a diverse forested landscape with different age classes helping with forest health resiliency.
- PAC- Are coal mines accounted for? GoA- if a coal mine was approved there would be changes to the size of the forest tenure, rather than the FMP. PAC-what percent of the FMA could be impacted by Coal mines? CFP that would depend on the particular mine however, most of the mining proposals suggest the mines would be operating above tree line so maybe not having a huge impact.
- PAC-the Nordic Club has received substantial provincial grants for trail building enhancements with more on the horizon, doesn't make sense that the government would then have the forestry companies log the enhancements? CFP- we need to find a balance of targeting the high fire risk areas while protecting the trail networks. The forest tenure holders are required to integrate operations to work with recreation so trails will be protected.
- PAC- Concerns within the MD of Crowsnest Pass with uncontrolled access to the backcountry. There's significant issues with dumping sewage and random camping, and squatting in the back country. People are living in tree forts they have accessed from mining exploration roads. There's not enough law enforcement or conservation officers to keep up with the issues. Need to make sure all access roads are closed. CFP- access roads built are temporary and kept closed with locked gates. The temporary roads are fully reclaimed and recontoured within 3 years.
- PAC- why not plant threatened whitebark pine and limber pine to make the world a better place? CFP- we are protecting and avoiding limber and whitebark pine. Typically these species are growing higher in elevation than where we operate however limber pine is naturally regenerating in some of our cutblocks with the help of the Clarks Nutcracker. The company also works with external groups to support whitebark pine protection and enhancement, such as the Whitebark Pine Ecosystem Foundation of Canada.
- PAC-In addition to old pine stands, poplars are important for pine marten.

- PAC-What about Bull trout and Westslope Cutthroat Trout? CFP, we follow the recovery plans, in addition to a strategy for protection of the cold water fish, there will likely be a cold-water fish VOIT in the FMP.
- PAC- who is monitoring the fish populations? CFP- GoA monitors fish and wildlife populations, the FMP models forest growth and associated indicator wildlife habitat.
- PAC- What about water quality? GoA- That's within scope for the government not the companies. Forestry is conservative with planning and operations. This results in not allowing forestry operations to change water flows, chemistry, temperature or sediment delivery. Regulations and enforcement are ensuring bared areas are minimized and that sediment is not being delivered to water courses. When sediment does reach a water course, the regulatory measures kick in. Because of the precautionary approach with operations involves avoidance of water, the discussion is around what are the upslope impacts, not with the water below. The expectation is, there is no impact to water as from a regulatory perspective there isn't much opportunity for sediment to make it to a stream. As soon as sediment reaches a stream, its an enforcement issue. Typically, when sediment does enter a stream the instances are negligible because of all of the regulatory requirements in place.
- PAC- What are the alarms that set off that sediment is being delivered to a stream? GoA- Sites are regularly inspected by GoA and high risk sites based on physiographic and climate attributes are prioritized. Industry is also required to self report.
- PAC-There's lots of culvert reparations going on, there needs to be controls in place. CFP: Only open bottom structures and bridges are used to cross watercourses.
- PAC-seems like industry has too much control, how do we know what's actually going on? GoA: When issues come up, the Company can be shut down and ordered to repair damage. We're not seeing big, long term issues. Zero sediment delivery is the expectation and the foresters out there are licensed with professional designations and are required to follow the regulations.
- PAC-The Oldman River is very low and is a muddy mess with sediment which is a big problem for fish.
- PAC- Forestry changes the dynamics of fish habitat, will there be a change to the harvest levels based on drought? CFP- the plan would be the same for drought conditions.
- PAC-What are the economic benefits of the Forest Industry to the people living in Crowsnest Pass? CFP- we can look into the specifics and get back with you.

Did some checking into the economic benefits of the forest industry, specific to Pincher Creek and the MD of Crowsnest Pass. Here's what we learned:

- There's approximately 50 folks employed in the forest industry
- \$4.5 million in labour income
- \$8.4 million in economic output (so another, 50 jobs at the Alberta average wage of \$77,000)

For the broader Lethbridge-Medicine Hat Economic Region (includes the MD Crowsnest Pass), forestry created:

- 1,989 jobs
- \$148.8 million in labour income
- \$593M in economic output

The broader region information is contained in the AFPA [Economic Impact Report](#).

- PAC- Is there a program to fund grants for the local community? PAC- yes there have been donations for lumber and cash for various community groups including the library, trail benches, fish and game club, and lumber donations for trail improvement projects.

## VOITS

- CFP-There are a few outstanding VOITs we've been busy working through.
- CFP-Discussed its draft invasive plant strategy that hasn't been submitted to GoA yet and includes:
  - Enhancements to support the MD Ranchlands invasive plants program
  - Data share with MD Ranchlands
  - Enhanced contractor training and incentives to report invasive plants
- CFP-Forest Encroachment, discussed a GoA forest encroachment document and model that was developed to help the PDT address encroachment concerns & areas. It provides a rough guide and CFP is working through the methodology and drilling down further to locate stands it can target for harvest to help with restoring grassland transitional areas. There are some details to work out as when we have done this in the past, the area restored was removed from the company's active landbase, which is something we want to avoid in the future. We also want to identify and get credit for the areas in cutblocks that provide grassland attributes and significant grazing/browsing opportunities for cattle, moose, deer and elk. We are trying to find the areas & strategy that creates a 'win-win' situation on the landbase.
- PAC- Aspen encroachment is the biggest problem for grazing, can't something be done about that? GoA- CFP doesn't have harvesting right for deciduous, however coniferous encroachment is an issue as well and the company has the rights to operate within coniferous stands.
- PAC – The pine encroachment is a big problem as well. Some areas of the alpine are too thick with trees, changing where forage is available. Additionally, need to recognize the young forest and the value it brings to rangelands. In the areas we are grazing in (north of Blairmore and in Dutch Creek) about 30% of the areas we are grazing in are cutblocks so we need the cutblocks for grazing.

Meeting adjourned around 2.30 p.m. The next meeting will be in the Fall of 2024.