

SECTION TWO  
PLAN DEVELOPMENT

# DFMP

DETAILED FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN

TEXT REPORT



BLUE RIDGE LUMBER INC.  
A SUBSIDIARY OF WEST FRASER MILLS LTD.

## 2 Plan Development

Management Planning is a dynamic and ongoing process. Planning is at different stages at different times.

The following reference or guiding documents have provided direction or have influenced the development of this Detailed Forest Management Plan.

### 2.1 Reference and Guiding Documents

Blue Ridge Lumber is aware of the following important National and Provincial documents and is incorporating many of these concepts in the development of the Detailed Forest Management Plan and other operating plans. This is accomplished through the adaptive, ecosystem management planning process.

Environmental awareness is increasing globally. Alberta is moving from sustained yield timber management to *sustainable forest management* to ensure that ever increasing demands and uses of the forest do not compromise its continued health, economic, environmental, cultural and social values. Alberta began to recognize this in the late 1980's when the Government appointed an Expert Panel on Forest Management to provide advice on the state of forest management in Alberta. The report titled: **Forest Management in Alberta: Response to the Report of the Expert Review Panel** outlines suggestions for integration, public involvement, Forest Conservation Strategy, planning, protected areas, timber management, reforestation and silviculture, inventory, research and department staffing, funding and organization.

In 1992, the Prime Minister signed the **Convention on Biological Diversity at the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development UNCED (Earth Summit)** in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. In the same year Alberta was a partner in the development of the **National Forest Strategy** and signed the **Canada Forest Accord**.

Canada's National Forest Strategy called for the development of a set of criteria and indicators for the conservation and sustainable development of Canada's forests. This process was launched by the **Canadian Council of Forest Ministers (CCFM)** in 1993. In March 1995, after two years of nation-wide consultations, the CCFM issued a framework of **Criteria and Indicators of Sustainable Forest Management in Canada**. Two documents were released in 1996: **CAN/CSA Z-808-96, A Sustainable Forest Management System: Guidance Document** and **CAN/CSA Z-809-96, A Sustainable Forest Management System: Specifications Document**.

**The Canadian Biodiversity Strategy** was also released in 1995.

In March 1995 **Alberta's Special Places 2000 Program** was initiated to complete a network of landscapes that represent the environmental diversity of the Province's 6 natural regions by December 2000.

A report of the Future Environmental Directions for Alberta Task Force was presented in March 1995 titled **Ensuring Prosperity: Implementing Sustainable Development**.

In May 1997 **the Alberta Forest Conservation Strategy (AFCS)** was signed presenting Alberta with a new way of viewing and caring for the forests in the Province of Alberta. The Alberta Forest Conservation Strategy aim is "to guide Albertans' in the future use and appreciation of the province's forests". Included in the Strategy are a Vision, Goal, and six Principles.

The Alberta **Forest Legacy: Implementation Framework for Sustainable Forest Management**. This document replaces the **Alberta Forest Conservation Strategy** and challenges us to look at a much broader landscape, and to blend consideration of all resource values when making management decisions.



## 2.2 Integrated Resource Management Plans

Blue Ridge Lumber staff is knowledgeable and are committed to the planning hierarchy. Company plans, and operations, incorporate the objectives of applicable Integrated Resource Management Plans (IRP) and higher level planning documents. The hierarchy planning process is:

- IRP information is used in the preparation of the DFMP level plans. (I.e. landscape level plans, and /or zones of primary use, conservation or protection etc.).
- DFMP information is used in the preparation of the General Development Plan (GDP) level. (I.e. road construction and maintenance, access management, and season of harvest etc.).
- GDP information is used in the preparation of the Annual Operating Plan (AOP) level. (I.e. stream crossings, timing of harvesting, cut block design, protected areas, riparian areas, etc.).

The October 1996 Alberta Environmental Protection map shows the status of the Integrated Resource Management Plans in the Province. The Fox Creek Knight Integrated Resource Management Plan (IRP) overlaps the W1 and W2 Management Units and much of the ANC FMA area. The Fox Creek Knight IRP identifies the critical habitat needs of the Little Smoky River Caribou herd. The Fox Creek Knight IRP was never completed.

ANC has developed the “Management Strategy Little Smoky River Corridor July 25, 1996” which includes the Little Smoky River Caribou. Blue Ridge Lumber has not operated in the W1 Management Unit caribou planning zone since 1992-93 when harvesting in the W1-L38 Coniferous Timber Quota License was completed. This license was cancelled August 24, 1995. There are no critical caribou zones in the Blue Ridge Lumber FMA area. The Blue Ridge Lumber FMA area is currently not covered by any Integrated Resource Management Plans.

## 2.3 Forest Management Planning Manual

On September 10, 1997 the Alberta Forest Management Science Council forwarded a report titled **Sustainable Forest Management – Advise on Timber Supply Protocols to the Alberta Sustainable Resource Development** and the Interim Forest Management Planning Manual – **Guidelines to Plan Development** was released in April 1998. This Detailed Forest Management Plan is developed in accordance with the Interim Forest Management Planning Manual. Blue Ridge Lumber has incorporated many of the elements and requirements from the Alberta Forest Management Planning Standard Version 3, June 2005. The planning standard is located at: <http://www3.gov.ab.ca/srd/>.

The Detailed Forest Management Plan is developed in a series of planning stages that are progressively reviewed and approved by different levels within the Department of Sustainable Resource Development. The Woodlands Forest Area is the “one window” for the coordination of forest management plan review and approval.

## 2.4 Terms of Reference

The “*Terms of Reference*” (**TOR**) was submitted for approval in accordance with the Forest Management Planning Manual. The terms of reference is “the plan to do the plan,” and describes how the plan will be developed, what products will be produced, by whom, when and why. It is the process by which approval is given to begin the forest management planning process. The Terms of Reference was submitted April 1, 1997 and signed off by the Regional Board of Directors and Environmental Committee, Alberta Environmental Area Managers, and the Director of Fisheries and Wildlife Management Division. The Terms of Reference was approved by the Regional Director in consultation with the Forest Management Division on December 15, 1997. The terms of reference was presented to the Regional Forest Advisory Committee on January 27, 1998.

## 2.5 Public Involvement Process

Forests are an integral part of the political, social, economic and cultural fabric of Canada and Alberta. There has been a dramatic growth in the forest industry in Alberta over the past several years. Between 1986 and 1994, there was approximately \$4 billion of new investments by the forest industry in the Province of Alberta. Approximately 100% of the conifer AAC and the deciduous AAC in the Province are currently allocated, and most of this publicly owned land is being managed on behalf of the public by the forest industry.



Public involvement is a requirement of the Detailed Forest Management Plan process. Blue Ridge Lumber recognizes this important aspect and since the late 1980’s Blue Ridge Lumber has invited public participation to identify community values to be included in our Detailed Forest Management Plans, and Annual Operating Plans. Since 1990 the Company has invited the public to attend our Woodlands Open House Meetings which are advertised in local newspapers

annually. Open House Meetings have traditionally been held in Whitecourt, Swan Hills, Fort Assiniboine, Fox Creek, and Niton Junction usually in the month of May. Blue Ridge Lumber also contacts special interest groups such as trappers, outfitters and guides and snowmobile associations to explain current year operations and planned 5-year general development plans.

Our public involvement program has six main components:

1. The **Annual Open House** process was started in the late 1980's. It involves advertising to the public, contacting commercial and non-commercial stakeholders by letter and phone to ensure that they are aware of the opportunity to provide input and comments to the various Company plans. Open houses are held in Swan Hills, Fort Assiniboine, Whitecourt, Fox Creek and Niton Junction during the month of May each year prior to the commencement of summer operations.
2. The Whitecourt Regional Forest Advisory Committee represents a broad spectrum of community interests. ANC Timber Ltd., Blue Ridge Lumber Inc., Millar Western Forest Products Ltd. and Mostowich Lumber Ltd. joined together to "customize" a plan for public involvement in forest planning for the Whitecourt, Swan Hills, and Fox Creek areas. A major part of this customized plan came from the communities in 1996, when Blue Ridge Lumber asked for public input into the design of a public involvement process. This customized plan is intended to eliminate the duplication of effort that would occur, if all four companies were to develop their own separate programs.

This committee was developed in April 1997 and has met monthly since its inception to provide recommendations to the regional forest industry and Sustainable Resource Development (SRD) on matters dealing with forest management.

The issues and resolutions that the committee has successfully dealt with in the past have been very generic in nature. The Whitecourt Advisory Groups is made up of a variety of stakeholders representing a range of views including trappers, recreation clubs, an environmental organization, teachers, contractors, oil/gas, aboriginal interests and municipal governments.

3. The **Swan Hills Communications Group** was formed in September 2003, and meets on a monthly basis. It functions much like the Whitecourt Regional Forest Advisory Committee. This local group's main focus is on the aesthetics, cut block size, cut block location and debris management around the town of Swan Hills. This organization consists of a group of Swan Hills citizens with representatives from Blue Ridge Lumber Inc, Millar Western Forest Products Ltd., Alberta Plywood Ltd. and SRD.
4. **Blue Ridge Lumber contacts trappers** affected by operations to obtain their input prior to the designing of harvest plans for each operating area. Ad hoc meetings are held to deal with specific concerns. **Outfitters and guides** who are affected by harvest operations are sent information prior to commencement of operations.

5. **Blue Ridge Lumber and the local snowmobile clubs** have met over the years to successfully coordinate operations around the clubs established trail systems. This has allowed BRL and club activities to be conducted on the same land base in a safe manner.
6. **Blue Ridge Lumber’s Open Door Policy** allows the general public to contact Blue Ridge Lumber office and field staff at any time to discuss issues or concerns.

In the Woodlands Forest Area, the four major Companies (ANC Timber Ltd., Blue Ridge Lumber Inc., Millar Western Forest Products Ltd., and Mostowich Lumber Ltd.) harvest approximately 25% of the conifer AAC of the Province, and provide approximately 1,200 direct jobs. In addition to the economic and commercial benefits, the BRL FMA area also supports a wide range of other resource values such as: fish, wildlife, water quality, aesthetics, tourism, recreational use, oil and gas, and cultural values. It is important to sustain the flow of social, economic and environmental benefits to Whitecourt and surrounding communities.

The four major forest industry companies have therefore joined together to “customize” a plan for public involvement in forest planning for the Whitecourt, Swan Hills, and Fox Creek areas. A major part of this customized plan came from the communities in 1996, when Blue Ridge Lumber asked for public input into the design of a public involvement process. This customized plan is intended to eliminate the duplication of effort that would occur, if all four companies were to develop their own separate programs.

This public involvement plan is intended to be a “best approach”, and hopefully will accommodate the specific needs of the community, as well as provide the forest companies with meaningful input into their management planning process. This public involvement plan is considered to be a “good starting point,” and the process is expected to “evolve” as the forest industry grows and develops over the next several years.

The *1996 Public Involvement Plan Concept* received approval by the Regional Director of the Northern East Slopes on January 3, 1997, after consultation and sign off by Alberta Environmental Area Managers, and the Director of Fisheries and Wildlife Management Division. Immediately after receiving approval, approximately 61 letters were mailed to potential stakeholders asking for interested persons to sit on the Regional Forest Advisory Committee. In addition, newspaper advertisements appeared for 2 weeks in the 5 regional newspapers inviting interested persons to attend a public meeting on February 27, 1997 at the Whitecourt Community Center. The meeting was very successful with 43 interested persons attending and agreeing with the need for a Regional Forest Advisory Committee. Membership of this committee was finalized at the April 10, 1997 meeting. The main purpose of *the Regional Forest Advisory Committee (RFAC)* is to identify forestry concerns and issues, so that the forest companies can take them into account in their planning process. The RFAC provides advice and recommendations to the forest industry and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development on matters dealing with land use planning so that the companies can take them into consideration in the forest management planning process. This public involvement process is an ongoing process and it is currently working well.

## 2.6 Issue Identification and Resolution

Blue Ridge Lumber receives only a small amount of unsolicited input from the public and as a result the Company actively solicits public input into its forest planning and operations through the following methods:

- Annual Woodlands Open House Meetings
- Ad hoc meetings and other forms of contact with special interest groups, individuals, or embedded timber operators
- Whitecourt Regional Forest Advisory Committee

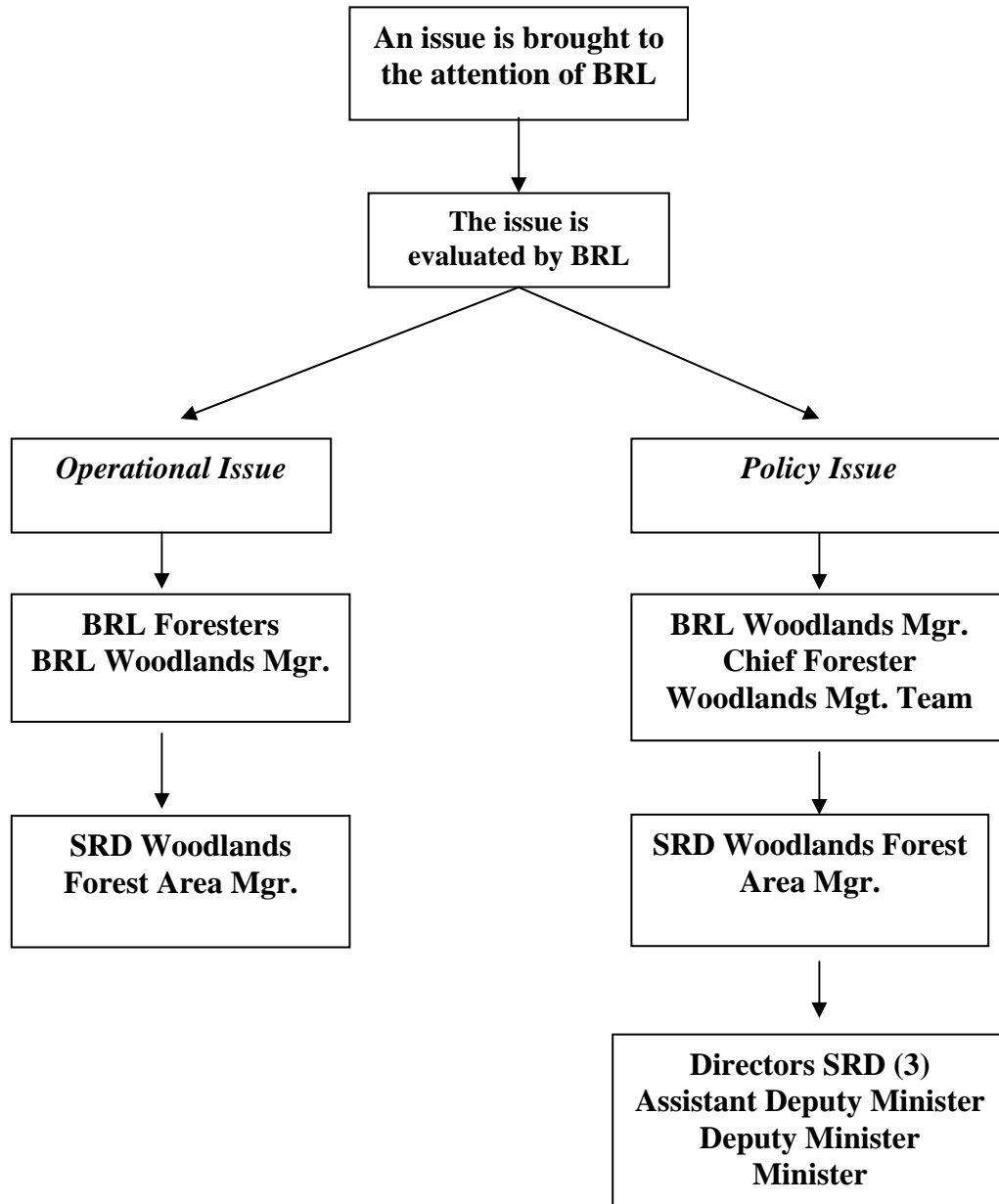
During these processes issues will occasionally arise. The Company addresses issues promptly, and the Company attempts to resolve all issues prior to involving any government department. A decision is made to move to the next higher level when an issue cannot be resolved at the lower level. The roles and responsibilities of the Company, stakeholders, and/or government are to communicate, meet, provide additional information, and facilitate and/or to make decisions depending on the circumstances. Issues are documented and classified either “operational” or “policy” and dealt with as follows:

“Operational” issues will be addressed by BRL Foresters or referred to the Woodlands Manager. Resolution mechanisms may include one or more of the following: one on one discussion, group presentation and discussion, a field tour, or a follow-up letter. If resolution cannot be reached the issue will be referred to the SRD Woodlands Forest Area Manager for further discussion and resolution.

The Woodlands Manager, Chief Forester and/or woodlands management team will address “policy” issues. If resolution cannot be reached the issue will be referred to the SRD Woodlands Forest Area Manager for discussion and resolution. Issues that still cannot be resolved at this level will be referred to one of the Directors of SRD, the Assistant Deputy Minister or the Minister depending on the circumstances.



**Table 5: Issue Identification and Resolution**



## 2.7 The 20-Year Status Report

*The 20-Year Status Report* was submitted to the Province on January 19, 1998 and approved on March 30, 1998 from the Assistant Deputy Minister. This document is a very comprehensive summary of Blue Ridge Lumber activities over the first twenty years of the BRL FMA, from September 1, 1975 to August 30, 1995. The 20-Year report was presented to the Regional Forest Advisory Committee on February 24, 1998.

The 20-Year Status Report is a progress report of both manufacturing and woodlands operations, and details the major accomplishments from 1975 to 1995. The report identifies challenges and opportunities for the next 20-year period which include:

- **Wood Supply** – Recent reductions in annual allowable cut seriously restrict our ability to maintain the long-term timber supply required by our manufacturing facilities. Maintaining wood supply is critical.
- **Land Withdrawals** – There are increasing demands for further land withdrawals due to oil and gas reserves, agriculture, grazing, recreation etc. that continue to present downward pressure on annual allowable cut.
- **Enhanced Forest Management** – There are opportunities to increase growth on the better sites close to the sawmill to offset the losses due to land withdrawals. Continued improvements to silviculture practices and vegetation control are essential.
- **Ecosystem Management** – BRL is moving from a sustained yield of timber management to an ecological based approach of sustainable forest management. Ecosystem management will be implemented using an adaptive management approach which makes provision for changes to forest management based on a continuous improvement process as new information, research, and methods become available.
- **Forest Protection** – Protection against fire insects and disease are major components of forest management and are required to maintain young and healthy ecosystems. There is an increasing demand to protect against fire, insect and disease. Education and programs are required to protect the forest and reduce these volume losses.
- **Public Involvement** – The Regional Forest Advisory Committee will be involved in the preparation of the DFMP. BRL will continue to invite general public participation by continuing to host annual Woodlands Open House Meetings in surrounding communities, notifying trappers and other resource users with our plans, and having an open door policy for the public to contact the Company with any concerns.

- **Forest Management Planning** – Forest Management plans are being developed in accordance with the 1998 Forest Management Planning Manual or its replacement.

## 2.8 Landscape Issues

The following is a summary of important social, economic and environmental issues on the landscape that have influenced the development of this Detailed Forest Management Plan. The majority of these issues have been resolved or incorporated into management planning.

- **Overlapping Dispositions of Coniferous Timber Quota Certificates and Deciduous Timber Allocations.** This creates different management objectives on the land base.
- **Utilization Standards are 15/10 for FMA area and 15/11 cm utilization for Coniferous Timber Quota Certificates.** There are also different utilization standards for DTA's. The new DTA issued to ANC in the Volume Supply Area 1 is 13/7 cm utilization. The MWFP DTA in the Volume Supply Area 2 is 15/10 cm utilization. Different standards complicate the planning process and calculation of the AAC.
- **Provincial 2000 Reforestation Standard** received some changes as a result of concerns raised by the Forest Industry and recommendations made by the Alberta Reforestation Standards Science Council. The new Alberta Regeneration Survey Manual comes into effect May 1, 2003. The new standards will allow for a better definition of free to grow in regard to the measurement of deciduous species around conifer trees. The new manual is posted on the department website at: <http://www3.gov.ab.ca/srd/forests/fmd/manuals/index.html>. Forest Companies have some concerns whether the 2000 reforestation standards are attainable but Companies do have an option to adopt the 2000 reforestation standard or develop their own FMA specific regeneration standard (Alternative Reforestation Standards). BRL plans to develop an FMA specific Alternative Reforestation Standard.
- **Whitecourt Forest District Fire Landscape Assessment.** BRL has commenced these discussions with Alberta Environment. Fire landscape objectives must be coordinated with fish and wildlife and other resource values.
- **Management of Riparian and Watercourse Buffers.** Recent research by the Foothills Model Forest suggests that careful harvesting along streams, lakes and riparian areas is one of the management requirements necessary to maintain the ecological integrity of some of these buffer areas. BRL would like to manage some of the watercourse buffer areas, but the Province must resolve this issue with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans before companies can effectively plan for this. The Province is currently developing a Riparian Management Policy.