

Directive 2005-01 – Questions & Answers

Q1: What is the difference between a cutblock and an opening?

A: A cutblock is an area or unit of planned or actual timber harvest. An opening is the unit for reforestation management (reforestation treatment, regeneration surveys, etc.). More than one potential opening may exist within a cutblock at the time of AOP approval. Openings are created at the time of entry into ARIS by May 15th of the year of cut for the cutblock. It's important to consider openings at the time of planning cutblock boundaries on inventory maps prior to harvest and subsequent block layout in the field.

Q2: Do I need to consider openings in harvest planning?

A: Yes. An opening is the unit of reforestation management. An opening can only have one regeneration standard or stratum. Having too many openings within a cutblock can result in operational difficulty in terms of locating opening boundaries for treatments and regeneration surveys. Further, it may be difficult to achieve the required area balance (with a +/- 5% or 10 hectare tolerance) as well as make the stratum declaration by 2 years after the year of cut if numerous pre-harvest stratum exist within an opening at the time of pre-harvest stratum assignment. Remember, openings cannot be sub-divided once created and reported in ARIS.

Q3: Why can't I sub-divide an opening in ARIS once its entered?

A: The number of openings must remain the same once they are created for provincial and federal reporting which utilize "number of cutblocks" as a statistic or calculation of a statistic. The ability to re-calculate the statistic using the same criteria is important. It's also administratively difficult for PLFD to track and deal with additional openings in terms of sorting out errors which can occur with downloads from industry (i.e. the duplicate record issue).

Openings may be sub-divided after they have been created for specific reasons outside of industry's control. One example is when a wildfire affects a portion of an opening. A new opening can be created for the wildfire portion according to protocol established in the Alberta Forest Management Planning Standard, Annex 1.

Q4: Do I have to wait 2 years to make a stratum declaration?

A: No. You can make a stratum declaration by May 15th of the year of cut for the opening. This is when the opening must be created and a regeneration standard must be reported in association with the opening. This is normally reported as the dominant pre-harvest stratum which exists for the opening, but operators may 'skip' this step and report the stratum declaration as the regeneration standard. The operator must specify that they are making the stratum declaration in the year of cut in their reforestation program (AOP) submission, and have supporting calculations available as outlined in Appendix 2 of the directive.

Q5: Do I have to balance area at the stage of pre-harvest stratum assignment?

A: No. Area balance is not required until the stratum declaration is determined for an opening by May 15th of the second year following the year of cut. Prior to stratum declaration, at the point the opening is created (May 15th of the year of cut), the dominant or largest area of pre-harvest stratum in the opening is reported as the stratum regeneration standard. This is later replaced with the stratum declaration after area balancing and accounting of all pre-harvest stratum area within all openings is determined through the stratum declaration procedures.

Q6: How do I enter information into ARIS?

A: A new record or opening in ARIS must be created for all areas timber harvested (cutblocks) in the timber year, by May 15th of that year. For this directive, the relevant domain codes are the 'Modified reforestation standard' (STD_MOD) and 'Reforestation Land Base Designation' (REF_DESIG) codes from Appendix C in the *ARIS Industry Operations Manual*. These domain codes are found in the REGENERATION_STANDARD_CODE, and TIMB_SUP_LD_BS_DESIG_CODE Columns respectively and are entered as follows:

1. The opening is first created by May 15th of the year a cutblock is harvested. The pre-harvest stratum assignment, which is the most dominant stratum area-wise in the opening, is entered into the STD_MOD domain code and REF_DESIG domain code. *Note: operators may enter the stratum declaration when creating the opening, but must specify this in the reforestation program of the AOP and have supporting calculations available according to Appendix 2 of the directive.*
2. By May 15th of the second year following the year of cut, the stratum declaration must be entered into the STD_MOD and REF_DESIG domain codes. This entry replaces the pre-harvest stratum assignment entries made in step 1.
3. If the operator wants to change the stratum for the opening after an establishment survey, the new stratum is reported in the STD_MOD domain code as the changed stratum and SR for stocking status. The REF_DESIG domain code entry must show the first letter as the stratum declaration and the second letter as the changed stratum. For example, if an opening has a stratum declaration of C-2000, and the changed stratum after establishment survey is CD-2000, the reporting is as follows: STD_MOD domain code is CD-2000, stocking status is SR, and REF_DESIG domain code is SC.
4. If the operator wants to change the stratum after a performance survey, the same procedures as in step 3 apply. The stratum reported in the STD_MOD domain code is considered the final stratum for the opening.

Q7: I have been reporting the REF_DESIG (Reforestation Land Base Designation) domain code under different protocols. Do I have to 'retroactively' update this field for all my openings?

A: No. Update this code using the protocol described in the answer to question 6 when you need to update the information for the opening or when establishment survey or performance survey results are reported.

Q8: If a company changes the stratum from the declaration after an establishment survey, how does SRD track this change for area balance and QAC adjustment procedures at performance survey?

A: The REF_DESIG domain code in ARIS is used to track stratum changes from the stratum designation for an opening. Although the second letter of the code can change after an establishment survey, and again after a performance survey to reflect stratum changes, the first letter of the code is 'anchored' with the stratum declaration for the opening all the way to reporting of final performance survey results and final stratum in ARIS.

Q9: The new directive states that only one performance survey result will be accepted by Alberta. What about performance surveys that I have done prior to year 14 and submitted to Alberta?

A: If you have submitted an NSR performance survey result to Alberta prior to May 15, 2006 and the survey was submitted 'early' or prior to year 14, you may 're-do' the survey at year 14 and re-submit to Alberta. If the survey submitted to Alberta was done at the final year available for performance survey (year 14 after the year of cut), then this survey result is final and no further survey results will be accepted by Alberta.

Q10: Can reforestation liability be 'swapped' between operators when the stratum change occurs between 2 operators?

A: No. Operators may 'pool' openings for stratum declaration, stratum change, and stratum area balance procedures, however the operator who created the opening retains the liability regardless of the stratum regeneration standard associated with the opening. If operators choose to 'pool' openings, there must be signoff and the same information must be included in both operator's AOPs. 'Swapping' of liability creates administrative difficulties for Alberta and is not feasible at this time.

Q11: What if I do a performance survey and do not want to submit results right away?

A: Survey results must be reported to ARIS in the year the survey was completed. An operator may conduct numerous performance surveys on the same opening over time, but only one performance survey result will be reported and accepted by Alberta.

Q12: What FMU do I utilize for this directive if the deciduous and coniferous AACs are calculated on different FMUs? For example, the deciduous AAC is calculated on an FMA, but there are embedded FMUs within the FMA for which coniferous AACs have been derived?

A: Generally, the smallest FMU must be utilized for the procedures in this directive. In the above example, the individual FMUs on which the coniferous AAC was calculated would be utilized as separate FMUs for stratum declaration, stratum change, area balancing, and QAC adjustment. The deciduous FMA holder would not be able to use openings across the conifer FMU boundaries for stratum declaration, change and other procedures in the directive.

Q13: A company submits an AOP committing to plant all blocks (including D blocks) to spruce. Their rationale is to convert all 'D' to C, CD, or DC. What controls or authority does SRD have in the approval or review of this submission?

A: This is an example of 'stratum conversion' which must be approved in the Forest Management Plan (FMP) or other strategy connected to the FMP such as an incidental conifer replacement strategy. The procedures in the directive allow for adjustments due to conversions to the Stratum Target Area for which stratum declaration area must be within +/- 5% or 10 hectares, whichever is greater. This adjustment is done 'post-harvest' for the openings that are harvested in a single timber year and single FMU.

Q14: How is understorey protection handled with stratum declarations?

A: The Forest Management Plan (FMP) assumptions for landbase and regenerated yield determine which stratum regeneration standard should apply to such openings. For example, if the overstorey is D or deciduous stratum and the understorey is coniferous, but not identified in the inventory it is often assumed in the FMP as deciduous landbase managed on a deciduous rotation. So a D stratum declaration would apply, unless otherwise approved by Alberta. Conversely, if such stands have an identified conifer understorey (based on inventory) and are designated for coniferous landbase under a coniferous rotation, then the stratum declaration should reflect this management strategy and be declared C or CD (depending on FMP assumption) for reforestation management.

Q15: How was the MAI Adjustment Factor derived?

A: The average provincial yield per hectare for the four stratum was determined and divided by a 100 year rotation.

Q16: a) How are the reports for strata declaration run?

A: These reports are generated by the companies and submitted to ARIS. ASRD does not “run” or generate these reports. SRD can audit these reports if required.

b) Who runs the reports - the SRD Area or Edmonton?

A: FMB in Edmonton can assist with “audit” procedures if required. These will be articulated in future RMP manuals.

Q17: What database is this going to be stored in so SRD Area staff can run reports?

A: Changes to the ARIS business rules and tables are being contemplated to accommodate the tracking requirements of directive. These will be tested and finalized prior to May 15, 2006.

Q18: What if I want to re-treat an opening after an NSR result on a performance survey submitted 14 years after the year of cut? (end of the survey window).

A: Alberta’s approval is required to do re-treatments as per sections 141.9 and 142.1 of the Timber Management Regulation. In lieu of providing this approval, the policy outlined in directive 2005-01 is that the reforestation phase ends once Alberta has received a performance survey from the disposition holder. Should the disposition holder wish to pursue further treatment, it would need to be for reasons other than to meet the performance regeneration standard (ie. enhanced forest management) to be approved by Alberta.

Q19: To what tree species does the QAC adjustment apply?

A: QAC adjustment is applied to the disposition or tenure of the tenure holder who caused the imbalance in area and resulting QAC adjustment. For example, if a coniferous quota holder caused a reduction in deciduous (D or DC) stratum (theoretically reducing deciduous yields), then the reduction would be to the coniferous quota quadrant allowable cut. This reduction is temporary until the next timber supply analysis is conducted for the coniferous and deciduous disposition holders. Alberta does not want incentives for reduction of allowable cut of other tenure holders. Further, tenure holders who are not in control of potential reductions to their QAC due to improper reforestation by other tenure holders should not be unduly penalized in Alberta’s view. This approach is deemed the most effective and fair at this time.

Q20: How will this directive work for those pursuing Alternative Regeneration Standards?

A: This will be developed along with the development of initial versions of Alternative Regeneration Standards (ARS). We know that 10 stratum will be involved, rather than 4 stratum and that MAI adjustment factors and possibly the formula for calculating QAC impact may change with ARS. We have not assessed ARS implications in detail and expect to do so as part of development of initial ARS proposals.

Q21: How does this directive work with the “Let it Grow” letter from FMB?

A: “Let it grow” is considered a legitimate re-treatment strategy for openings of any stratum (C, CD, DC, or D) that are NSR at establishment survey and meet the conditions outlined in the April 1, 2004 letter from the Executive Director of Forest Management Branch to forest industry.