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BC Forest Professional Letters (July-Aug issue)

NSR Challenge for British Columbia

As BC's Chief Forester, the issues of reforestation and NSR in BC are of great importance to me. From my perspective, the article, "NSR and British Columbia's Reforestation Crisis," (May/June 2011) regarding not satisfactorily restocked (NSR) forests over-estimates the NSR situation in British Columbia.

There is currently about 715,000 ha of NSR in the RESULTS database of which about 240,000 ha is not associated with a forest licensee or BCTS legal obligation to reforest. We estimate that there is the potential for an additional 650,000 ha of NSR arising from mountain pine beetle and 200,000 from other sources such as wildfire for a potential total NSR area (that is not associated with a legal obligation), that is closer to about 1.1 million ha.

I do not believe that the assumptions underpinning the May-June article adequately incorporate factors such as:

- The net down for areas outside the Timber Harvesting Land Base.
- The amount of area that will regenerate naturally and/or have sufficient residual stocking levels.
- The amount of area that will be harvested and carry legal obligations.

Regarding the last point it, is too early to say definitively how much mountain pine beetle-impacted area will ultimately require government reforestation funding because harvesting and regeneration of dead pine stands will continue for the next few years. Industry and government are focusing harvesting on beetle-attacked and burned stands where we can capture current timber value and reforest in a timely manner. It is also clear that additional harvesting and regeneration will result from bio-energy and other new uses for beetle-killed wood. Past experience has taught us that what may seem uneconomical today can become a much

more valuable resource tomorrow. Reducing the impacts of wildfires and pest infestations is also a key priority of the 'Forests For Tomorrow' (FFT) program under the Land Based Investment Strategy. In areas where it is clear that harvesting will not be an option, FFT is using innovative and cost-effective techniques to survey and reforest productive sites (e.g. 45,000 ha of reforestation through 2010.)

In addition, given the significant area burned by wildfires in 2009 and 2010, the FFT program will be assessing the damage, and identifying the best opportunities, to re-establish sufficient stocking.

It will take a collective effort on the part of forest professionals to address stewardship issues such as reforestation and addressing NSR. In an upcoming issue of the BC Forest Professional I will be providing more detailed information related to the determination of Ministry NSR estimates and how we are responding to the NSR challenge.

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