

FOREST LANDSCAPE PLANS

Critical to 21st Century BC Forest Stewardship

Bill Bourgeois, PhD, RPF (Ret)
October 2022

Forest Landscape Plans (FLP) are a critical component of the Vision Framework essential to long-term forest stewardship of the BC Forest Asset and subsequently community resiliency, but it must be developed smartly to capitalize on its usefulness.

Vision Framework is the base



Government has embarked upon Modernization of the BC forest sector. This provides an opportunity to address critical strategic deficiencies in the current forest stewardship framework and realize the full potential of the provincial forest asset while moving toward the goal of community resiliency¹.

¹ <https://www.bcforestconversation.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/BC-forest-renewal-vision-framework-Nov-update.pdf>

The proposed Vision Framework provides a clear structure to guide forest professionals and other decision-makers to work within, but at the same time allow for identification of areas where the geographic, ecologic, and social conditions in the local/regional area would benefit from flexibility to achieve a desired vision for the forest. It also provides communities with an understanding of forest stewardship plans being approved. The proposed Vision Framework builds on the strengths of the current forest sector and forest resources management, focuses on the areas needing revitalization actions and provides a path to delivery of a 21st Century Forest Sector without totally restructuring.

FLP is the tool to deliver the visions for the provincial and local/regional forests

The Vision Framework provides strategic guidance to the FLP process to reflect government and community (Indigenous and Non-Indigenous) desires for long-term forest stewardship and the possibilities for a local/regional wood manufacturing sector. These are reflected in strategic but not technical vision statements and must not include tactical or operational level detail. It identifies the areas where balancing of the local/regional conservation, economic, and social/cultural forest values will be required to achieve the provincial and community visions.

FLP is critical to building social license and community resiliency

Provincial and community vision statements are critical in:

- 1) Clarifying the community desires,
- 2) Providing guidance to the forest managers and advocates for the local/regional forest,
- 3) Moving forward with a diversified forest-related community economy, and
- 4) Building public confidence and social license in the stewardship of the BC Forest Asset.

These are fundamental to achieving government's goals and long-term forest and wood manufacturing sustainability. The FLP is the component of the regulation and policy infrastructure required in moving toward desired local/regional and provincial forest visions that contribute to community resiliency. It is a tactical plan intended to achieve a balance of the conservation and management of existing environmental, social, cultural, and economic forest resources within a landscape unit. It cannot be driven by one or another resource (e.g., timber-AAC, old growth protection, etc.). When developed within the Vision Framework, the FLP has many benefits to the community².

FLP provides an opportunity for community involvement

The multi-stakeholder Regional Land Use Planning process of the 1990's taught us that the best results are achieved when the mandate of the "negotiating tables" is clear and focused on identifying "common interests." The process faltered when detailed operations decisions became the focus. This is not surprising due to the fact the tables were constructed with a mix of technical and non-technical people

² <https://www.bcforestconversation.com/wp-content/uploads/SPATIALLY-AND-TEMPORALLY-EXPLICIT-STRATEGIC-PLANNING-FRAMEWORK.pdf>

talking from different perspectives and knowledge and not focusing on interests. We need to build on this lesson learned when developing FLP's.

Developing a community vision for the local/regional forest requires multi-stakeholder input³. However, the FLP requires technical input from organizations focused on knowledge of the local/regional values to deliver the vision. The vision is a precursor for the management vision associated with the FLP. Consequently, it would be preferred the interests were identified in local/regional vision statements first to guide the technical planning process of the FLP. Let's learn from the past!

It is critical Government clearly identify these two processes are separated, or the FLP will not be completed in a reasonable amount of time and the overall community vision may not be attained. My understanding is this differentiation was not clarified by Government when embarking on the FLP pilots. Consequently, care should be taken to monitor potential challenges that may occur if the process is to be successful.

FLP's should be the basis for determining sustainable fibre availability

The spatially and temporally explicit scenario modeling used in developing a FLP provides an opportunity to integrate and balance a range of forest values across the landscape². One output includes an estimate of the fibre availability over a period of 250 years according to each scenario. Especially when the reliability of the data used in the modeling is increased through application of a sound and progressive growth and yield program⁴ and an enhanced forest inventory^{5,6} program. The latter program provides information on the types of fibre being produced that can be very useful in deciding what type of wood manufacturing best fits the available "fibre basket."

Sustainable fibre availability is a critical input for community resiliency and providing the certainty of supply for current and new wood manufacturing facility investments. It is also the first factor an investor uses in looking for opportunities to bring new secondary wood manufacturing and economic diversification to communities.

When structured and delivered in a sound manner, the FLP is a tool to not only deliver the provincial and community visions for the local/regional forest, but the basis for the sustainable fibre availability component in the Chief Forester's determination of the Allowable Annual Cut (AAC). In the past, critics from the environmental movement and forest industry have both argued the AAC is too high for

³ <https://www.bcforestconversation.com/stewardship/infrastructure/>

⁴ https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/forestry/stewardship/forest-analysis-inventory/panel_summary_report_final.pdf

⁵ <https://www.bcforestconversation.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Forest-inventory-foundation-for-community-resiliency.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.bcforestconversation.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Letter-Minister-Conroy-re-Enhanced-Forest-Inventory.pdf>

different reasons. A FLP will demonstrate where the fibre will come from and the amount per period demonstrating the true fibre availability based on what is truly available “on the ground.”

This is a major change from the traditional method of the AAC determination. Normally, the AAC is determined and then the operations forest planner is charged with finding it within the tenure. Application to its greatest value, the FLP reverses this process and provides greater support for the AAC determination by the communities and addressing many arguments by the critics.

BC needs the FLP initiative to be successful!